

Marx and Latin America

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Marx and Latin America

By

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Translated by

David Broder



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To my *Pasado y Presente* comrades

Contents

The Latin-American Marxism of Aricó: Uncovering the Autonomous
Role of Politics in Marx’s Fallacy ix
Horacio Crespo

Introduction xxxv
Carlos Franco

Preface to the First Edition li
Preface to the Second Edition liii

1. An Evaded Reality 1

2. The Growth of the Movement and the Crisis of Theory 5

3. The Reality and Fallacy of Marx’s ‘Eurocentrism’ 9

4. *De Te Fabula Narratur?* 17

5. The Theoretical and Political Presuppositions of National
‘Autonomy’ 27

6. Hegel *Redivivus* 39

7. The Political Reasons for a Disconnection 47

8. Marx’s Bolivar 53

Appendix 1. Rosa Luxemburg and the ‘Crisis’ of Marxism 71
Appendix 2. Hegel and Latin America 76
Appendix 3. Marx and the Prospects of Russian Society 81
Appendix 4. Marx’s Shift of Attention Towards Agrarian Communities 83

Appendix 5. On the Social-Democratic Leaders' August 1914 'Betrayal' ...	89
Appendix 6. Marx and the Spanish Revolution	91
Appendix 7. Aníbal Ponce's 'Marginal Notes'	98
Appendix 8. On the Effect of British Hegemony in Latin America	101
Appendix 9. Karl Marx	103
Epilogue to the Second Edition	117
References	143
Index	149

The Latin-American Marxism of Aricó: Uncovering the Autonomous Role of Politics in Marx's Fallacy

Horacio Crespo

Seek in Marx everything that betrays and denies
Marx's Marxism

José Aricó, 1983

In his preface to the first edition of *Marx y América Latina* in 1980, Carlos Franco termed it 'a foundational text'.¹ The three decades that have passed since this statement by the Peruvian sociologist and friend of Aricó have but confirmed this appraisal. The book opened up a radically novel perspective on an area of reflection and debate that is of capital importance, and, certainly, still relevant today, given its new, original and, indeed, controversial paradigms: namely, the specific forms of the reception of socialism in Latin America. Aricó's original approach to this subject – through an exhaustive analysis of the erroneous view largely introduced by Marx himself in his biography of Bolívar (though other texts soon contributed to fostering it) – attributed central focus to the complexities of Marx's works and their interpretation, together with the thorny issue of the so-called 'national question', a sphere of theoretical inquiry and political practice that cannot be evaded. This issue also relates – as Marx's various texts regarding Latin America show – to the real historiographical dilemma presented by the debate on the character of the wars of independence,

1. Aricó 1980a. One year later, Carlos Franco published his own *Del marxismo eurocéntrico al marxismo latinoamericano* (Franco 1981), a study very much influenced by Aricó's ideas.

the original paths taken in the construction of the new states that arose from Spanish America, *caudillismo*, the engulfment of precapitalist societies by the relations of an expanding capitalism, the birth of modern imperialism and the dialectic between the central capitalist countries and the dependent and colonial periphery.

The terms 'socialism' and 'nationalism', often at odds with one another in the Latin-American experience of the past century, represent the decisive crossroads of the political programmes of social transformation and national liberation in the peripheral countries, the touchstone for the essential differences defining the broad political terms of the alternative models of change for our continent. Juan Carlos Portantiero posed this question clearly in his reference to the debates between Victor Haya de la Torre and Julio Mella over strategies for revolutionary transformation in the late 1920s:

The polemic from which we begin² bears significant witness to the ideological struggle in Latin America; documentary proof of the difficulties faced in articulating a way of thinking able to synthesise the national-democratic problems of the Latin-American revolution within a socialist perspective... If Haya and *Aprismo*, as an expression of the anti-imperialism of the middle-classes, in stressing the national question left until an unspecified future the possibilities of socialist transformations, then Mella and the Communist Parties underestimated this initial national-democratic moment in projecting its practical tasks onto an imagined 'pure' socialist revolution.³

Portantiero also gives proper focus to Mariátegui's participation in this debate, marked by his 'distancing himself from Haya de la Torre's ideology' in 1928–9 and the 'determined stance' he took in favour of the socialist side of the 'back-and-forth of the ideological struggle between nationalism and socialism as the potential heirs of the university reform struggle'; given the manner in which Mariátegui positioned himself here, 'any agreement between the revolutionary socialism and the anti-imperialism of the initial heirs of the university reform struggle proved impossible, and the history of the 1918 movement bifurcated into two conflicting paths'.⁴

Contributing, as far as possible, to mending this constant division, creating a new terrain of political development for the Left – understood in open, plural terms – was a challenging task to which both Aricó and Portantiero committed themselves during the difficult period that had begun with the defeat of the armed organisations and popular movements in Argentina in the early 1970s.

2. Portantiero is referring to Julio Antonio Mella's pamphlet *¿Qué es el APRA?*, published in 1928.

3. Portantiero 1978, pp. 97–8.

4. Portantiero 1978, pp. 100–1.

This necessarily implied progressing much further with the exploration that both had already embarked upon with regard to the nature of national-popular societies; besides, here lay the seed of another of the points on which they saw the value of engaging with Gramsci. As Aricó commented:

I believe that Gramsci, in one way or another, developed all of his reflection in terms of a reality he characterised as 'national-popular'. *And I think that Latin-American societies are, essentially, national-popular.* In other words, that they still seriously face the question of whether or not they are nations.⁵

This expression of new political paradigms implied a fresh analysis of the specific experience of Peronism in Argentina.⁶ This elaboration was further advanced and complexified with the adoption of democracy as the *necessary*, strategic horizon of socialism: this understood democracy as the political system and form proper to the harmonious organisation of society, and not simply as the historical-structural dimension of the bourgeoisie's role in history, as it had been presented in classical Marxism and, in particular, in the Leninist schema.

This process, which we might call the 'social-democratisation' of the thought and political activity of Aricó and Portantiero and the tendency of which they were the principal exponents, was neither straightforward nor particularly rapid, but rather developed across their period of exile in Mexico between 1976 and 1983.⁷ It spanned their critical reflection on the defeat of the decisive revolutionary moment of the Southern-Cone experience, especially in Argentina; an inquiry into their own Communist past and the balance-sheet of 'actually-existing socialism'; an assimilation of the long-term shift initiated by the 1956 Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; taking stock of the Western-European experience of socialism and Marxism, especially that of Italy –

5. Aricó in March 1983; see Crespo and Marimón 1983, p. 39. The italics are my own.

6. The journal *Pasado y Presente*, in its two series, was a space for collective reflection on Peronism and revolutionary political strategy, in the same manner as Portantiero's inquiry on the origins of Peronism; see Murmis and Portantiero 2004. The most significant analysis of the *Pasado y Presente* group's treatment of Peronism in their journal can be found in a dialogue between Carlos Altamirano and José Aricó in August 1991, recorded in Rafael Filippelli's film *José Aricó*. See Aricó 1999a, pp. 101–11.

7. In terms of groups, I am referring to those joining together in the Mesa Socialista and the socialist wing of the journal *Controversia* in Mexico, and in the Club de Cultura Socialista de Buenos Aires and the journal *La ciudad futura*, as the most visible poles of regroupment. *Controversia* devoted itself to dialogue between socialists and Peronists critical of their own respective trajectories and capable of developing a plural debate and discussion as the basis for a democratic future for Argentina, overcoming fratricidal confrontation. I am conscious of the reservations one might raise over this 'social-democratic' characterisation – frequently used by the political adversaries of Aricó, Portantiero and the Club de Cultura Socialista in a pejorative sense – but I believe that it has sufficient interpretative value to support its use, discarding its other semantic connotations. For an open, ironical reference to both this characterisation and its conjunctural meaning in the 1980s, see Aricó 1999a, pp. 254–5; on its context, see Note 8 below.

and also that of Eurocommunism; dialogue with other groups of political and intellectual exiles in Mexico and with those Mexican communists and socialists on a similar learning curve; the beginning of the 'processes of transition' to democracy in Latin America (and in Spain); and expectations of a new political leadership as part of this process, as, indeed, occurred in the 1980s with the Raúl Alfonsín government. The defeat of the Peronists by the Radicals in October 1983 played a decisive role in setting their trajectory, in that it created a dynamic where the tension implied by the role of 'the prince's advisor' – as limited as it appears to have been in Aricó's case, but more definite and clear-cut for Portantiero – and the development of a socialist intellectual pole in the framework of a difficult confrontation with Peronism – a defeated, but nonetheless defiant and fierce opponent – narrowed ever further the space for reflecting on both this Peronism and the working class whose majority it comprised. However, for certain people this dialogue did continue, and was in some measure present in the development of the so-called 'renovation' of Peronism in the mid-1980s.⁸

We can also add that the commanding role of Gramsci's conception of 'hegemony' and the powerful appeal to civil society it entailed was the fundamental mechanism by which the political evolution here under discussion developed.⁹ This centrality ascribed to civil society was also key to Aricó's interpretation of Marx's writings on Latin America; indeed, it is the structuring force behind this book, allowing us to define the concern with this new theoretical field as dating from 1977 onwards. It is necessary to underline this shift in the points privileged in readings of Gramsci, which in previous years – especially after the 1969 *Cordobazo*; the experience of the trade-unions in the car-industry like the *Sindicato de Trabajadores de Concord-Sindicato de Trabajadores de Materfer* (SITRAC-SITRAM) and the *Sindicato de Mecánicos y Afines del Transporte Automotor* (SMATA) at Fiat and Renault in Córdoba; along with the experience of other

8. Although this subject extends far beyond the terms of the present preface, these definitions and difficulties can be seen clearly in the round table between socialist and Peronist intellectuals – whose participants included José Aricó, Juan Carlos Portantiero, Carlos Altamirano, Nicolás Casullo, and Carlos Chaco Álvarez, amongst others – later published in the journal *Unidos*, issue 6, August 1985; this is reproduced in Aricó 1999a, pp. 253–60. Of course, the most important source on this complex and still not fully elucidated issue is the journal *La ciudad futura* from these years.

9. The so-called Morelia seminar met in this Mexican city in 1980 with the patronage of UNAM. It marked a moment of condensation of this theoretical perspective and, more importantly, its relations with other political projects close to it. The list of participants is very telling in both senses: José Aricó, Ernesto Laclau, Liliana de Riz, Emilio de Ípola, Rafael Loyola, Carlos Martínez Assad, Norbert Lechner, Carlos Pereyra, Chantal Mouffe, Jordi Borja, Ludolfo Paramio, Jorge Reverte, Luis Maira, Fernando Fajnzylber, Sergio Zermeno, Juan Carlos Portantiero, Jorge Béjar, Fernando Petkoff, Julio Cotler, Manuel Antonio Garretón, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Regis de Castro Andrade, René Antonio Mayorga, Edelberto Torres-Rivas, Pablo González Casanova, Rolando Cordera and Francisco Delich. The results of this meeting, introduced by Aricó, are published in Martín del Campo (ed.) 1985. On this subject, see Burgos 1997.

unions at the 1969–73 high point of working-class combativity in Argentina – had focused on the experience of the councils and the workers' autonomy expressed by *L'ordine nuovo* and the *biennio rosso* in Turin. In the mature Aricó, there is a strong disposition to listen to arguments ascribing a central role to civil society and to distrust analysis that privileges state-action. As such, he was sympathetic to Marx's critique of the philosophy of right and of Hegel on the state, one of the fundamental points of argument in *Marx y América Latina*. This is important to take into account, insofar as it allowed the author to attune his hearing to Marx's argumentation and to grasp hold of a tool essential for interpreting his hostile biography of Bolívar.

Marx y América Latina was conceived and written in the political and theoretical context that I have described and is a central event in the aforementioned process, insofar as it marks an important projection of its author (even if not an exhaustive one), his inspiration and his development upon his arrival in 1983, in my opinion now completely mature. This was expressed for the first time in the interview Aricó gave in March of that year, significantly entitled 'Latin America: its destiny is called democracy', published one month later in the *Revista de la Universidad de México*.¹⁰ Here, Aricó showed his strong disposition towards an engagement with Octavio Paz, stressing the great relevance of the agenda raised by the Mexican poet and essayist regarding both issues of culture and politics, and demonstrating that this was a necessary course of renewal for the Latin-American Left. It is interesting to note that this interview took place at the moment of the reception of the second – Mexican – edition of *Marx y América Latina*, and that, significantly, it was published together with an extensive review-commentary on the book.¹¹ A few days later, Aricó gave a synthesis of his book in an address in Trier marking the centenary of Marx's death.¹²

* * *

10. See Note 5 above.

11. Aricó 1982a. The author added an epilogue to the text that had previously appeared in Lima in 1980. The review-commentary was my own: see Crespo 1982, pp. 40–2. Many of the arguments of this interpretation are reproduced in this preface. It appeared together with an interview (pp. 35–9) and the journal's editors presented the text as a mark of the centenary of Marx's death, describing Aricó as 'a Latin-American theorist who has always approached the texts of the author of *Capital* with a critical, open and anti-dogmatic attitude' (p. 40). The interview was later reproduced in *Vuelta Sudamericana*, Vol. 1, No. 2 of September 1986, upon the request of Danubio Torres Fierro, editorial secretary of the journal. Aricó corrected some aspects of style without changing the substance of the text. Torres Fierro had previously been the editorial secretary of the *Revista de la Universidad de México* at the time of its publication of the aforementioned interview and review-commentary. Extensive extracts of this interview were also published in *La ciudad futura*, Nos. 30 and 31, December 1991 and February 1992, in the section paying homage to that publication's founder-director upon his death. Moreover, the complete text (as it appeared in *Vuelta Sudamericana*) was reproduced in Aricó 1999a, pp. 17–30.

12. The presentation was published in *Nueva Sociedad*: see Aricó 1983.

Aricó often used to say that theories are put to the test ‘at their vanishing point’; and, indeed, the problematic of this book *puts into question* decisively important aspects of Marxist thought, especially the *nature and autonomy* of *politics*. Further still, it puts at stake the intelligibility of the historico-political, the possibility of a phenomenology of political historicity that goes beyond chance-facts and the triviality of the fortuitous. The discussion centres around the polemical biography of Bolívar written by Marx, a problem that took flight with the publication of this text in Spanish translation by Aníbal Ponce in the first issue of his journal *Dialéctica* in March 1936.¹³ Furthermore, the content of Marx’s statements and the passion of his diatribe for decades generated an intense and constantly-renewed debate, whose history has not been fully assimilated, and which, in spite of its long past, has not been able to free itself from a thick web of misunderstandings – whether their intentions are evident, or else something for us to speculate on – that cloud its elucidation and, moreover, its real meaning. Ponce himself, in his ‘marginal notes’ on Marx’s text, said of Bolívar:

Landowner, rancher, owner of mines and slaves, Bolívar not only represented the interests of his *class*, but defended them against the liberal petty bourgeoisie and the popular masses still lacking in coherence. Supported by *England*, much like all the continent’s other revolutionaries, it is difficult to understand how Bolívar could honestly have served the so-called democratic and anti-imperialist ‘Bolívarism’.

The harshness of Ponce’s judgement is not only based on Marx’s text or motivated by a more immediate political dispute with Haya de la Torre and Vasconcelos, as Kohan suggests: expressed, here, was a whole schema for interpreting the course of history, fundamentally based on the ‘ripening’ of the objective conditions for progressive historical processes, coinciding with the Soviet historiography of his period.¹⁴ This historical schema is Aricó’s principal theoretical target as he advances his wider elaboration on Marx’s text.

Thirty years have passed since the publication of *Marx y América Latina*, and the time in which this book was written has definitively passed; indeed, the centrality of Marxism to interpreting society has faded and certain forms of thinking of socialism and putting it into practice – the Soviet Union was then one of the planet’s two superpowers – are now only a matter of history. However, Aricó’s text is still today an essential point of reference. The distance that has developed between the book’s appearance and the present, provided both by time and the momentous change of conditions, is no barrier to it continuing to inspire commentaries and arguments of the most diverse kind; and its referentiality is such

13. Marx 1936.

14. Kohan 2000, p. 73.

that it can already be considered a classic of Latin-American thought. One aspect of great relevance today – at a time when Aricó's significance in the development of transformative Latin-American thought is more recognised than ever – is to illuminate the place of this book in his wider political and intellectual production and the more general lines of its reception, as a contribution to a richer, more complex reading, in the current challenging political and social conjuncture.

In Aricó's text, two distinct levels of reflection are intertwined, organically linked in their treatment of the question concerned, but nonetheless easily possible to differentiate. First, the theme of the form taken by the presence of Latin America in Marx's work, characterised by singular elements whose genesis and meaning constitute a strand of cardinal importance to the development of the book. Second, the *crisis* of Marxism, pertinent to both Europe and Latin America at the time of Aricó's elaborations. The complex linkage of the two planes is realised by means of the method used by the author to carry forward his work. We are speaking, here, of a Marxist who considers Marx's writings from a *critical* perspective, and who assumes that this critical approach constitutes Marx's own fundamental intellectual and methodological stance, distancing himself from any conception rendering the theoretical *corpus* of the author of *Capital* a scientific, closed and definitive *system*.¹⁵ Aricó addressed Marx's texts by means of what he called a *contextual* reading, a work *in* Marx, and on this point we must note that Aricó's methodological postulate made him an early exponent of the intellectual history that would later gain prominence in Argentinian and Latin-American academia. His work shows a course of reflection, a form of analysis and a global conception of Marxism as a current of social thought that plays an integral part in the modern world. This recognition of the theoretical and political presence and role of Marxism represents the other substantial axis of the book.

15. One book of crucial importance with respect to the distinction between 'scientific Marxism' and 'critical Marxism' and its derivations in theory is Gouldner 1980. This volume was the first and only one – of the four parts originally planned in this never completed study of Marxism – ever to be published. The appearance of the first English edition occurred in the same year as the death of the New-Yorker sociologist, philosopher and student of Weber and Marx. It would be interesting to explore in depth the correspondence between the work of Gouldner – who was not a Marxist – and that of Aricó, who considered himself a Marxist in the sense of belonging to a tradition of thought: as he commented, 'Speaking of the "death" of Marx seems to me to be as stupid as speaking of the "death" of Aristotle'; he maintained his Marxism to be 'the expression of a commitment', a 'taking of sides' for the transformation of society, to prevent the 'apocalypse' foreshadowed by capitalist development. Such a correspondence appears on some important questions, such as the stress on 'anomalies' and 'vanishing-points' of social theories, even though the result of completely independent intellectual paths and without communication between the two. Indeed, one can even note the presence of a common 'theoreticism' at the expense of *practice* as an essential category of Marxist epistemology, though it is certainly more accentuated and consequential in Gouldner.

The positions set out by Aricó on this terrain together make up an important concept, one that resonated during the Latin-American Left's laborious mid-1980s efforts in pursuit of a theoretical, ideological and political recomposition. Within this operation lies one of the book's most interesting clarifications: Aricó does not hold the relevance of Marxism to be that of a system that holds the keys to the meaning of history, and, through this power, the key to discovering how it is possible to transform social reality in a progressive direction. Rather, his is a polemical stance, in that he demonstrates the genesis and historicity of the uncritical 'positivisation' of Marx's theoretical and political concept, located in the theory and practice of both the Social-Democratic Second International and the Third, Communist International, in particular during its Stalinist period. Its strength lies in his *putting into action* of a dialectical epistemological conception and of a *theoretical place* that reaches beyond the concrete subject being investigated; this is to highlight a theoretical stance and method of engagement with a situation that demanded intellectual audacity and a creative political spirit.

What is his first object of investigation, that which serves as the trigger for his whole analysis? Aricó concerns himself with the form in which Latin America appears in Marx's work – for example, his references to the war between Mexico and the United States or his disproportionately negative text on Bolívar – which, for the author, cannot be explained by *what is said*, this being the path attempted by all those who had previously addressed this question. The key to elucidating the question is the form in which Latin America *does not appear* in these texts, the manner in which they constitute an 'evaded reality'. The line of argument pursued is thus grounded in the *contextualisation* of Marx's texts on Latin America, contrasting them with the pieces Marx devoted to China, Turkey, Russia, Ireland and Spain. These were texts in which, with a theoretical and methodological display of surprising incisiveness and radical innovation – not only with respect to what was being said by Marx's contemporaries, but, and above all, with respect to his own postulates in all his previous work – he gave account of the phenomenon of the *Asiatic*, of the particularities of state-formation, and addressed the phenomenon of the nation in new terms. The complex relation between the presence or absence of given perspectives in Marx's treatment of somewhat similar processes cannot be resolved, therefore, with an appeal to sweeping generalisations about his work – like the notion of Eurocentrism, so often used in Latin America to dismiss Marxism and socialism in general – but only by means of a contextual reading through which one text illuminates another, they question one another, open up cracks and interstices of interpretation and encourage a radical assimilation of a thought in development, constantly under construction, open, resistant to being frozen, systematised. They are, indeed, 'non-systematic'

in their most essential foundations.¹⁶ In summary, Aricó argues that if, in one text, Marx is Eurocentric and, in another written contemporaneously, he is not, evidently the limitation must be something other than this. It is not a matter of the scarce importance of Latin America in Marx's work – actually, such texts are neither 'thin' nor few¹⁷ – but the prejudice with which he addressed the continent. We must find the answer to this enigma in another dimension of Marx's mental universe: the political.

Indeed, Aricó did not only question whether Marx's thought had been walled in by the theoretical presuppositions of the Hegelian framework, preventing him from facing up to the complex phenomenon of the universalisation of capitalism and the symbiosis of an 'industrial' capitalism and a 'colonial' capitalism complementing it, functional to its needs and laws. Aricó moreover noted how this close relation, of an organic nature, progressed in Marx's thought to the point where – very significantly – he began to recognise the role of the oppressed colonial world in the process of social liberation. This is very apparent in his reflections on Ireland.¹⁸

None of this can be found in the analysis he devoted to Latin America: on the contrary, these texts give expression to the crudest of prejudices and a basic lack of understanding of the importance of the wars of independence and of the tumultuous and complicated process of building more than a dozen new nation-states, surely without precedent in modern world history. Where Marx did succeed in elaborating in theory the 'autonomy' of the national sphere, 'based on which, *and only based on which*, the question of social revolution can be thought of in concrete terms, or, to put it another way, the question of the concrete possibilities of a conjunction between the fight for national emancipation and the process of class-struggle',¹⁹ he completely overcame the Eurocentric assumptions so apparent in the moment of his theoretical elaboration marked by the revolutions of 1848. Aricó's view rounds off:

Our thesis is that neither the 'superficiality' of the journalist nor the 'ignorance' of the historian, nor the limitations of 'methodology', nor still the disdain of the 'Eurocentrist', can explain Marx's paradoxical attitude towards Latin America.

16. On this point, Oscar del Barco's reading in 'The other Marx' is still indispensable. Originally published as an introduction to Marx 1982, then along with other works of his in Del Barco 2009.

17. The *corpus* of these texts can be found in Marx and Engels 1972.

18. The texts on the Irish question can be found in Marx and Engels 1979 [in English, see Marx and Engels 1971, a collection produced by Progress Publishers in Moscow – DB].

19. Aricó 1980a, p. 94 (the italics appear in the original).

All these limitations could only emerge and distort his reflections because a pre-existing and prejudicial *political* attitude clouded his vision.²⁰

Such a marked political prejudice encouraged the reappearance in Marx's thought of the Hegelian idea of 'non-historic peoples' – at a moment when he was clearly overcoming this concept in other areas of his analysis – as the basis for his characterisation of the process in Spanish America, that is to say, considering the Latin-American peoples as conglomerates of human-beings who lacked the maturity and, we might say, 'critical mass' necessary for the establishment of a nation with a legitimate right to exist.²¹ And in parallel to the return of this Hegelian idea, so, too, was revived his aversion to Hegel's postulate as to the role of the state as the pre-established and creative instance of civil society. Insofar as he presupposed the non-existence of the nation, Marx could not see the processes in Latin America beginning with independence as anything other than the all-pervasive and irrational (also in the strong Hegelian sense) role of the state in the shaping of civil society. These were, moreover, processes in which, above all else, the state played a decisive role in moulding society. Marx, according to Aricó, could not see within this process 'the presence of a class-struggle determining its real movement and thus at the basis of its logical-historical systematisation';²² from such a perspective he could not adequately characterise this reality, which appeared to him as a single, fused mass.

If one accepts that there is a political prejudice – and not a theoretical impediment – in Marx's vision, then it is important to identify where it lies. Aricó believes that the conditions of the creation of the Latin-American states, as we have referred to, and the first stages of their development upon independence, were so eccentric to Marx's postulates on the relationship between state and civil society – starting from the rejection of the Hegelian principle according primacy to the state – that they led him to 'exclude' from his thinking 'a reality that appeared to his eyes as the untrammelled advance of Bonapartism and European reaction'.²³ It is here that we find the roots of Marx's prejudice, which impeded any possibility of him understanding a phenomenon like that of Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia in Paraguay, and the most explicit case of a self-evident, categorical misunderstanding: that regarding the historical figure of the Liberator Bolívar, whose identification as a typical Bonapartist dictator – painted in the most despicable colours – is clear.

20. Aricó 1980a, p. 172.

21. Aricó published *Friedrich Engels y el problema de los pueblos sin historia* (Rosdolsky 1980 [English version Rosdolsky 1986 – DB]), prepared for publication in the same period that he was putting together *Marx y América Latina*.

22. Aricó 1980a, p. 127.

23. Aricó 1980a, p. 107.

On this point, we meet with a central theme of Marx's historico-political work, one that stayed with him all his life and that motivated some of his most decisively important and influential reflections: the French Revolution.²⁴ Marx developed his stance with regard the French Revolution by way of a critique of the conception of the state advanced by Hegel, for whom it could not be a 'chance-product of the social' such as it appeared in Von Ranke, who sought to root the state in custom and historical practice itself. For Hegel as for Guizot, the question of political stabilisation was the problem *par excellence* of the Restoration period, 'the problem that the epoch must resolve'. For Hegel, the state is a totality that comprises and surpasses civil society; the state constitutes the principle figure in history and the realisation of the Idea. As Furet aptly states, 'In Marx the opposite occurs, by means of a Feuerbachian inversion. There exists a priority of civil society over the state, and it is this same priority that is the constitution *par excellence* of modernity.'²⁵ However, here we meet with certain of Marx's perplexities faced with the concrete course of history: with Napoleon, the state recovered a certain autonomy with respect to civil society: after the Eighteenth Brumaire, the future Emperor re-encountered the meaning of the Terror, the autonomy of the political faced with the steely determination of the social. In other words, for the young Marx (of 1843–4) the specific history of the French Revolution somehow stemmed from the dialectic between state and civil society. Furet writes:

In this sense, and in his own vocabulary, Marx imagines a history of the Revolution very similar to that of Guizot: founded on the ultimate primacy of the social over the political and conceived as an inevitable reappropriation of the state by the bourgeoisie, according to the 'truth' of civil society, after the episodes of Terror, the Empire and the Restoration.²⁶

Marx's text on Bolivar is not, then, an exception, but at most an outburst, inscribed in this terrain forbidden to his theory: the richness of the political, the vitality in history. Bolivar is a buffoon, like Louis Napoleon, while the Emperor, 'his nephew's uncle' – inverting the famous witticism – was essentially no less so, and would only recover his majesty and the force of the original in the wake of the farce of the *déjà vu*.

Marx's problem is, therefore, how to gauge the extent of the autonomy of the political, how to deal with the shock of 'exceptional cases', of the subordination of the ruling class to *its* own state, the state that must manage its interests across

24. Marx's texts on the subject, collected by Lucien Calvié, can be found in Furet 1986. To this compilation, we must of course add his *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

25. Furet 1986, p. 23. See also pp. 18–22.

26. Furet 1986, p. 37.

the whole of society.²⁷ In sum, how to re-establish the 'normal' narrative presupposed in theory, when faced with the multifaceted and *unexpected* aspects of historical events. The powerful image in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* of farce taking the place of tragedy offers him an alibi for accepting the mediation of politics and the state, which dulls *pure* class rule; this cannot, however, hide the fact that in the very same *young* Marx, 'his thought now comprised this determination of the political by the social (or rather, by the socio-economic), whose paradoxes he would not cease trying to justify throughout his whole life, in particular in his works on nineteenth-century France'.²⁸ Furet went on to say that Marx denied the autonomy of political history and that in many instances, Marx's focus on the social turned into vulgar sociology. The strength and superiority of Aricó's reasoning, developed almost a decade before the publication of Furet's book, is rooted in the fact that he finds the path of Marx's formulation *on the terrain of revolution*: his overcoming of the frustration of 1848, the new characterisation of the bourgeoisie as counter-revolutionary, and the establishment of a new historical subject of social transformation, the revelation of a Copernican Revolution: the revolutionary force of the national movements of the countries oppressed by imperialism. The overcoming of Eurocentrism comes about through the *political route*, through the return to consideration of the autonomy of the political, the Via Regia towards the later elaborations by Lenin and the revolutionary Marxist currents of the twentieth century. To a significant extent, we can say that the thread running through Aricó's entire project was a sustained effort to fully reassert the autonomy of politics and the legitimacy of its theoretical status within the body of the Marxist tradition.

His systematic analysis of Marx's reflections on Latin America and of the nature of the impediment that prevented him from seeing in that continent what he was able to see in Asia, Ireland or in Spain is grounded in a series of propositions that constitute nodal points of Aricó's reflection on Marx's *oeuvre* and on Marxism. Synthesised a little schematically, they are as follows:

First: Marx's thought does not constitute a system in the manner of Hegel's, but rather is made up of a multiplicity of theoretical strands and a succession and interpenetration of problems, methodologies and conclusions whose development can be traced across the duration of his whole *oeuvre*.

Second: there do not exist in Marx's *oeuvre* certain privileged, 'scientific' texts and others that can be cast aside. Aricó does not work on the basis of a

27. This can explain the perplexities of a certain Marxism deriving from this aspect of Marx in trying to theoretically ground its analysis of fascism and 'national-popular' revolutionary process, and thus the strength and richness of Gramscian contributions.

28. Furet 1986, p. 38.

distinction and hierarchy between texts in the manner of Althusser, even if in a certain sense he was somewhat concerned to highlight and inquire into those 'forgotten' works of Marx not seriously taken into account by the later Marxist tradition – the paradigmatic example would be the *Grundrisse* – not included as the canonical Marxist 'system' was established by the Second and then Third International. Marx's 'political' texts, those dedicated to the study of the international situation from the 1850s onwards – up to this moment singularly devalued as 'occasional', professional and journalistic writings, many of them the product of his financial pressures, paying his daily bread, and, as such, without such significance as to include this body of work in the 'real' development of the 'science of history' – for Aricó acquired importance in revealing the cracks, discontinuities, new directions and preoccupations that, on the one hand, underline the problematic nature of any 'systemic' interpretation, and, on the other hand, establish a distinct periodisation of Marx's *oeuvre*. Indeed, they laid the basis for the possibility of advancing much further in the consideration of a theory of politics, *the political* and the modern state, for a long time considered 'unfinished', 'little-developed' or 'non-existent' in the intellectual production of the author of *Capital*.

Third: in this sense, Aricó's work presents an implicit periodisation of Marx's *oeuvre* that locates a profound break, a radical discontinuity, between a still-'Eurocentric' Marx, a Marx convinced of the idea of the progress that the bourgeois world will bring about – many interpretations of the *Communist Manifesto* have stressed this aspect, also present in his articles on English rule in India and even in certain passages of *Capital* – and his increasing concern, from the late 1850s onwards, for the problems generated by the development of capitalism, its role in the colonial world, the emergence of national struggles, and the complex relations between the 'national question' and the struggle between classes. For Aricó, this discontinuity reaches a breaking point in Marx's 1867 writings on the Irish question, where we can find a transcendental inversion in his categorisation of the revolutionary rupture and its social agency: the English proletariat would not be the liberator of Ireland, but rather the national struggle of the Irish would be a condition of social liberation in England.²⁹ Aricó emphasises this development as representing a true Copernican Revolution in Marx's political thought, later accentuated – in the 1870s – through his study of the problems of the Russian rural commune and its potential to serve as the basis for a non-capitalist course of development, challenging the whole framework of the

29. Aricó took his thesis of a turn in Marx's thinking on Ireland from Renato Levvero's introduction to Marx and Engels 1979, originally published in *Vento dell'est*, no. 26, 1972. See also Levvero 1975; another important work on the Irish question can be found in Jiménez Ricárdez 1984.

'necessary' pattern of societal development Marx had established, loaded as it was with positivist premises.

Fourth: the existence of a radical theoretical difference between Marx and Engels, very noticeably reflected on the terrain of the national question, the consequences of which have been very important insofar as the latter contributed significantly to the effort – completed by Kautsky – of systematising Marx and turning him into the organic paradigm of the European workers' movement, with positivist and Eurocentric baggage whose far-reaching consequences were very prejudicial to the development of the socialist movement, especially in the colonial and peripheral countries. These differences between Marx and Engels were constantly stressed by the critical Marxism of the 1960s and '70s, Aricó being a case in point. However, Alvin Gouldner put caveats on this, extending the problems highlighted to Marx himself.³⁰

Fifth: a fundamental feature of Aricó's interpretation is that of stressing the discontinuity between Marx's thinking and the Hegelian system, and his precise refutation of a 'historicism' fundamental to the genesis of Marx's thought, revealing that at certain levels Aricó's work was influenced by Althusser's reading, even if certainly in a complex and filtered manner, essentially due to the always-present Gramscian dimension.

Lastly, we must highlight the fact that Aricó drew a sharp distinction between Marx and 'Marxism': between the still-open work of a now-'classic' thinker, including the possibility of many different readings and interpretations, and the development of Marxism as the substantive theory of the socialist movement, even if not singular and in which there coexist diverse theoretical and political traditions. Aricó's fundamental conception on this essential point lies in the idea of the organic connection of theory with social reality, of course simultaneously rejecting the mechanical schema of a relation between 'structure' and 'superstructure', the result of a turning the rhetorical imagery used by Marx into a theoretical absolute. The connection Aricó has in mind is an organic, deeply dialectical one, between society/social movement/theoretical development, between the problems actually posed by society, reflection on them and the practical movement to resolve them, far from the Althusserian stance of 'theoretical practice', which necessarily ends up in metaphysics. These are planes related amongst themselves, but which also maintain a sphere of relative autonomy. To this is owed the urgency in Aricó's interventions with respect to revising the relations between the history of social movements and the history of Marxism, of their inter-relation, interdependence, and also their imbalances and misuses.

30. Gouldner 1980.

This is an evident sclerosis (Lukács spoke of this in his last interview in the late 1960s) whose overcoming could bring about a renaissance.

* * *

An important element in the genesis of Aricó's book was Pedro Scaron's study of Marx's writings on Latin America, which led to the 1972 publication of the *Cuaderno de Pasado y Presente* including Marx and Engels's texts on this theme.³¹ Here, it seems fitting to outline those of Scaron's opinions that may have been important to Aricó's later work. In the first place, his appraisal of the text 'Bolívar y Ponte', on which the Uruguayan scholar said that, in spite of its 'confusion and errors, we believe that it represents an important text, an document that cannot be overlooked in any study of Marxist thought on Latin America'. He also averred, as Aricó later would, that 'rather than being important as a biography of Bolívar... Marx's text has its own value as a document for the study of Marx'. Other elements in Scaron's work that later appear in Aricó include his pointing to the relevance of Marx's 'journalistic' writings, the identification of Bolívar with Napoleon III, the persistence of prejudices from Hegel and, more importantly, Marx's difficulties over the national question. Scaron emphasised – unlike Aricó – the importance of Engels's thought on the national question, at times more advanced than that of Marx; in the interesting periodisation that he lays down in terms of Marx and Engels's works on the national question, he does not note the 'paradigm shift' that Ireland represents in these elaborations. Moreover, his extensive, exhaustive notes on the biography of Bolívar were, without doubt, of absolute importance to Aricó's later work.³²

Aricó himself makes no direct reference, either in his interviews or correspondence, to the origins of his book or the process of writing it.³³ However, we can look at a well-informed account of the context in which it was developed. Aricó

31. Marx and Engels 1972. Pedro Scaron had already edited a collection of Marx's texts on Latin America, published in Montevideo in 1968 in the *Cuadernos de Marcha*. According to Jorge Tula, it was this work that sparked Aricó's interest in producing a fuller compilation for the *Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente* collection, leading him to contact Scaron, initiating a long and very fruitful intellectual relationship. Pedro Scaron was the translator of *Capital* and took part in the translation and editing of the *Grundrisse* in the editions devised and published by Aricó.

32. Marx and Engels 1972, pp. 99, 13; 'A modo de introducción', pp. 5–15; text and notes on 'Bolívar y Ponte', pp. 76–93 and 105–120, respectively.

33. His correspondence has still not been fully systematised – a laborious and complex process that I am currently condemned to, working with the personnel of the Biblioteca José María Aricó, in order to be able to make these documents available to interested researchers – and as such consulting them is still complicated and it is impossible to make any conclusive statements. As I have already said, among the papers that have been organised, there are no references – or at least direct ones – to the process of developing and composing *Marx y América Latina*. See Archivo Aricó, Correspondencia, Boxes 1 and 2, Biblioteca José María Aricó, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba.

had already moved to Mexico City in late 1976, following a controversial departure from Buenos Aires that July in order to exchange views with Arnaldo Orfila Reynal (founder and director of the Mexican publisher Siglo XXI) on the situation after that April's military raid and shutting down of the Argentinian subsidiary led by Aricó, including the arrest of two of its members, Jorge Tula and Alberto Díaz. He later took on important roles at the publisher's headquarters. Aricó mentioned his work there in a letter to Juan Carlos Torre, where in addition to continuing the publication of the Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente and completing a new edition of *Capital*, he took charge of devising two new collections, the Biblioteca del Pensamiento Socialista and América Nuestra (the latter focused on publishing key texts on Latin America's history, thought and political action).³⁴ Aricó's role in devising América Nuestra was not widely known until recently, but it represented an important point of connection with his Latin-American interests, which intensified on account of his Mexican experience.

As in many other cases, the easing of tensions originating in political activity and repression were reflected in Aricó immediately registering an improvement in his living standards, modest but comfortable, an everyday 'living modestly but well',³⁵ something novel to political militants who arrived in the Mexican capital after a long period of upheavals, hardships and real dangers, some of them very dramatic.

El Negro Porta [Juan Carlos Portantiero] and us live fifty metres apart in a rather pretty housing complex, with wide green spaces, a heated swimming

34. In an article in homage to Arnaldo Orfila and Siglo XXI, Adolfo Castañón stated: 'But beyond literature, the catalogue created by Arnaldo Orfila and his team – originally comprising Martí Soler, Eugenia Huerta and Elsa Cecilia Frost and later by Jaime Labastida and Federico Álvarez – published a great quantity of books on the social sciences, many of them of a Marxist stamp. Indeed, in this field the publisher presented a new translation of Marx's *Capital*, which had the immediate effect of Wenceslao Roces being forced to revise his own, published by El Fondo'. The omission of Aricó from the elaboration of the Siglo XXI catalogue, in itself incomprehensible, is aggravated by an even more flagrant distortion of the facts: the man centrally responsible for the inclusion of 'Marxism' in the publisher's output was Aricó. The new translation of *Capital*, as well as the first appearance of the *Grundrisse* in Spanish – titles of which tens of thousands of copies have been sold – was an initiative advanced in Buenos Aires, under the inspiration and direction of Aricó. Only Volume III of *Capital* was first published in Mexico. Not to mention the more than a million copies of the Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente and of the Biblioteca del Pensamiento Socialista, and, in the light of new evidence, also of the América Nuestra collection. Thus it is strange that Castañón omits Aricó's essential work: perhaps an echo of the difficult and fractious personal and professional relationship between Orfila and Aricó? See Castañón 2005.

35. José Aricó, letter to Juan Carlos Torre (copy), Mexico City, 26 December 1976, Archivo Aricó, Correspondencia, Box 1, Biblioteca José María Aricó, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba.

pool, parks, sports-pitches, and so on, on the south side of the city, in an area fairly close to the publishing house and the new office of the FLACSO [Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales].³⁶ I had thought that such a concentration (besides ourselves, we know of ten other Argentinian families) could prove bothersome, but I must admit that we are far enough apart that you can go weeks without seeing anyone. That is not the case with El Negro, who we see daily. He is busy with his course at the FLACSO and his projects of work. I, for my part work, 6 hours at the publishing house and also run a course on an Introduction to Marx's thought at the Colegio de México.³⁷

Aricó pointed to the heart of his intellectual concerns, which he also dated, in this same letter to Juan Carlos Torre:

Besides, I am still determined to complete my vast tome, which I began to draw up with some energy at the end of last year [1975] and which I have left untouched since March. Just this week I have resumed this work, and I promised Orfila that I will submit it by the end of April.

In other words, by late 1975 Aricó had already decided what would be the core of his work: his concern with Latin-American socialism; its history in relation to social and political developments among the working class and other popular strata; the complexities of its theoretical, cultural and political reception; and the difficulties of anchoring it and its regional variations and actors. He would repeatedly refer to his project with the word *mamotreto* – ‘a very bulky book or file, principally one that is irregular and out of shape’, in the Academia de la Lengua Española's definition – and we can consider this to be his preoccupation until his death, fifteen years later. This included milestones such as the appearance of *Mariátegui* and *La cola del diablo* and writings in which he constantly returned to and rewrote various passages with new focus and perspective, whether he made major or subtle changes, but all articulating this same great political and intellectual enterprise, attested to by the numerous versions of *La hipótesis de Justo* in his archive. It moreover comprised a multiplicity of unpublished texts in various stages of completion which still await a critical edition hierarchising and ordering them and, through this process, allowing for them to be read. In this sense, his *oeuvre* resembles that of his much-admired Gramsci, and a good part of it is still waiting for an editor.

36. The Olympic Village, built as accommodation for the athletes of the 1968 Games, and subsequently transformed into a housing complex.

37. José Aricó, letter to Juan Carlos Torre (copy), Mexico City, 26 December 1976, Archivo Aricó, Correspondencia, Box 1, Biblioteca José María Aricó, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba.

But what was this project about? We can put it in his own words:

For my part, I can only tell you that little by little I am organising my affairs such as to resume the work that I was devoted to when we were in Buenos Aires. I had enough problems then and still now I am having problems getting hold of all the material that I had collected. I find this situation rather annoying. Among these materials are those that I had selected on Brazil, of which there were many. I hope to be able to bring them over to Mexico, but given your interest in the subject and my craving to resume the project I was hoping to appeal to your kindness, that you might give me a hand. To explain: as you will remember, the volume (which was essentially a compilation of documents, presented by an extensive introduction) covers a period from 1919 to 1943. For editorial reasons, and for many others (among them, reasons inherent to my research itself) I had to split the tome in two and dedicate a first volume to the previous stage of development of 'Latin-American socialism', from the end of the last century to 1917. I have got hold of a fair amount on this theme. Among other things, I collected a file of texts that appeared in *Die Neue Zeit* and other publications from that era. The volume will include the reports presented at the Second International, and so on and so forth. Afterwards there will follow a second volume dedicated to the 1919–43 period, to which will be added the reprint of the 1929 Congress's stenograph. This is my plan for a special series of the *América Nuestra*, which will be titled something like 'Documents for the social history of Latin America'. I hope that this is ultimately possible and not a pure fantasy.³⁸

In a letter to Ludolfo Paramio, he commented:

One of the things that continue to worry me is the fact that I had to leave all my research instruments behind in Buenos Aires. I have succeeded in getting back a certain quantity of materials important to continuing to draft my tome. At the present moment, I am compiling materials on the formation of the Latin-American Left. If things go according to plan, it is probable that next year a first volume will be ready, called something like 'the formation of Latin-American socialism'. It does not claim to be a theoretically important or historically significant work. It will simply be an extended introduction to another, no less extensive compilation of documents on the formation of the socialist parties in Latin America. Then, I will continue by examining the relations between the Third International and the Latin-American CPs. Unfortunately, I had to

38. José Aricó, letter to Luiz Alberto Moniz Bandiera (copy), Mexico City, 28 February 1988, in the Archivo Aricó, Correspondencia, Box 1, Biblioteca José María Aricó, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba.

leave all the general works I had on the Third International behind in Buenos Aires, and this makes my task somewhat more difficult, since in Mexico I cannot get hold of what cost me so much blood and sweat (and no few *pesos*) to get hold of in Argentina.³⁹

A further explanation by Aricó appears in a letter to Leopoldo Mármora:

Apart from my never-ending thanks for what you are doing,⁴⁰ I want to remind you that I am in an extreme hurry to get hold of all the material as soon as possible. I had committed to finish my work by the end of May [1977], and I cannot do so before I have been able to read all this material.⁴¹ My work is progressing rather slowly due to this and other setbacks, but I am determined to finish it however much the cost, under penalty of having to bear domestic troubles and the most cutting jibes from my closest friends. Siglo XXI will publish it in a new collection called 'América Nuestra', but I am running out of time for it to be able to come out this year. As I believe I already told you, there will be two volumes, the first dedicated to the genesis of Latin-American socialism and the second to the Latin-American communist movement and the Comintern. I have received a fair amount of materials and this allowed me to resume the project, but I am desperate for the things I am missing and that I either have in my library in Argentina or else could easily get hold of there. For example: in the first issues of *La Vanguardia* a debate developed over the socialists' political action. I have almost all of it, but I do not have a piece by Ave Lallemand in issue 16, only having searched as far as number 15! I have asked around in Buenos Aires for this text, but I doubt that it will reach me, as it is difficult to oblige friends who are still there to spend their time on such a trifle, all the more so given what's going on there! At times I feel a little ashamed of asking, asking them from the comfort of my armchair in Mexico City.⁴²

Aricó continues:

I had the idea (or, rather, the need) of compiling a list of the references to Latin America and works on the Latin-American Communist Parties in the

39. José Aricó, letter to Ludolfo Paramio (copy), Mexico City, 12 October 1976, in Archivo Aricó, Correspondencia, Box 1, Biblioteca José María Aricó, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba.

40. Searching for materials in Germany and translating them from the German.

41. Referring to the difficulties with the Amsterdam Institute of Social Studies and ordering photocopies.

42. José Aricó, letter to Leopoldo Mármora (copy), Mexico City, 22 April 1977, in Archivo Aricó, Correspondencia, Box 1, Biblioteca José María Aricó, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba.

two publications of the Comintern: *International Press Correspondence* (published in Russian, French, German and English) and *Communist International* (pub. In Russian, German, English, French, and at times – from the 1930s onwards – in Spanish). I thought I personally could do this work in a trip to Europe I thought I might make this year. Unfortunately matters have become rather complicated and I will not be able to do so until next year, let's say September 1978.⁴³

The complexities of his intellectual project and the difficulties of getting hold of the mass of necessary materials meant that the project was strung out. In a letter to Julio Godio, in response to his letter of 27 April 1977, Aricó explained much of the reason why this was the case:

Not only have I not written the book on communism in Latin America, but I very much doubt that it can be done in a reasonably short timeframe. I have the particular vice (one a psychoanalyst could easily interpret) of setting myself to a sheer quantity of tasks that then justify the impossibility of doing what I really (or apparently) want to do... However, not all is as I am telling you, because I have been working on something that I may be able to hand in for printing within a few months (two or three, perhaps), the first part dedicated to the origins of Latin-American socialism (or socialism in Latin America, to be more precise). I believe I have told you that a deeper study of the subject forced me to rethink a number of matters related to the antecedents of the communist formations of the 1920s and thus I had to delve into the socialism and anarchism of the first decades of the century. The first tome will be immense, not so much because of what I am writing as the mass of documents, where the greatest interest in the volume may perhaps lie. For example, I am including in it all the works on Latin America that appeared in the *Neue Zeit* (of which there are a fair few, and many of interest) as well as the documentation on the relations between the Latin-American socialists and the Second International. I must confess that I am rather weighed down by the work I have taken on, among other things due to its vast size and the limitations of my knowledge; but moreover, and more fundamentally, because the terrain on which the organisations and ideas addressed in the work operated constantly brings me back to the still-not-studied question of the historical process of the structuring of the working class in Latin America. At times I have the impression of watching puppets dance but without being able to see clearly the hand that guides them. I believe that it is this subject that, in one way or another, we must begin to face up to; we are discussing some aspects

43. Ibid.

of it in Mexico, as I will tell you about on a future occasion, when there is more time.⁴⁴

Portantiero has stressed the originality of Aricó's stance, here, capping the core meaning of *Marx y América Latina* by closely associating it with his overall concern as to the role of Marxism in the formation of Latin-American social thought. The real value of this book is when it is read as the great introduction to the *mamotreto*, the whole of his project, whether published or still awaiting publication. The question as to where to find the reasons for the age-old disconnection between socialism and Latin America has intellectual roots, but also practical ones, and would persist in both his book on Mariátegui and that devoted to Justo, which Portantiero published after Aricó's death.⁴⁵

The preparation and publication of *Marx y América Latina* were carried out through a continuous and intensive intellectual and political effort, fundamentally characterised by his elaborations and discussions regarding the works of José Carlos Mariátegui and his relationship with the group of Peruvian intellectuals who came together in the Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Participación (CEDEP).⁴⁶ Aricó's interest in Peru was not only conjunctural; it had grown in tandem with the esteem in which he held the radical reformist experiment mounted by the Peruvian colonels under the leadership of Juan Velasco Alvarado, starting in 1968. It is in Peru that two of the main aspects of his thought – Gramsci and Mariátegui – were tied together, a combination completed, somewhat later, with the addition of Juan B. Justo. Portantiero aptly explains:

The deprovincialisation of Mariátegui that Aricó proposed in the Peru of the 1970s allowed him to restore with some force an influence that, since his youth, had marked his intellectual and political development: that of Antonio Gramsci, to whom he devoted his last book. The two figures can be combined in one common aspect: that of being writers alone in expressing an against-the-current type of Marxism, who sought to ground themselves in particular realities and express a distinct politics. In this sense, the revivals of the two writers in Latin America fed one another: the rebirth of the debate over Mariátegui allowed the figure of Gramsci to burst onto the scene in Peru,

44. José Aricó, letter to Julio Godio (copy), Mexico City, 9 June 1977, in Archivo Aricó, Correspondencia, Box 1, Biblioteca José María Aricó, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba.

45. Portantiero 1999. The same volume (Aricó 1999b) includes a text on Mariátegui and the origins of Latin-American Marxism, originally published in Mexico City in 1978 as no. 60 of the Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente (Aricó 1978a).

46. This body, founded on 6 June 1977 as an NGO, was devoted to developing participatory policies for social and political development-projects through action in partnership with popular organisations and democratic institutions; campaigns together with trade-unions and agricultural producers' associations, municipal and regional governments; and networks for coalition-building and political action.

at the same time that the diffusion of the latter in the rest of the continent facilitated the discovery of the originality of the author of the *Seven Essays on Peruvian Reality*.⁴⁷

The political climate in Peru was marked by the debates that took place during the latter years of the 1975–80 Francisco Morales Bermúdez government, which had abandoned all of Velasco Alvarado's pretensions of reformism and, faced with massive protests, was forced to call a Constituent Assembly in 1978 and presidential elections in 1980. After the Constituent Assembly elections, in which the *Partido Comunista Peruano* and other left-wing organisations had won a significant number of seats, the unity of the Left was seen as a necessity; this ultimately resulted in the creation of the *Izquierda Unida*, which in subsequent years became one of the country's main political forces.

December 1978 saw the publication – in the Lima journal *Socialismo y participación*, produced by the CEDEP – of Aricó's article on the central importance of Mariátegui to the origins of Latin-American Marxism.⁴⁸ However, as Franco said, this debate was 'mediocre and largely motivated by the defence of narrow party-interests'; nonetheless, he stressed the positive reception which the article achieved, without doubt serving to spark interest in the Córdoba essayist's interpretation of Mariátegui.⁴⁹

Indeed, in October 1979 Aricó visited Peru for the first time, after Sinesio López invited him to lead a seminar on Marx and Marxism at the social-sciences faculty of the Universidad Católica, later to be extended to the Universidad de San Marcos. However, in López's words,

Once in Peru, Pancho decided to run a little course on Mariátegui and put off his presentations on Marx until some future occasion. His discussions of Mariátegui left deep tracks, and, moreover, sowed the seeds of works of great value. The most brilliant of these was, without doubt, Alberto Flores Gallindo's *La agonía de Mariátegui*.⁵⁰

47. Portantiero 1999. Pablo Sandoval stressed the importance of this outlook for interpreting Aricó's influence in Peru.

48. Aricó 1978b. Cuaderno de Pasado y Presente, No. 60, devoted to Mariátegui, had recently appeared in Mexico (Aricó 1978a).

49. Carlos Franco, letter to José Aricó, Lima, 24 May 1979, in Archivo Aricó, Correspondencia, Box 1, Biblioteca José María Aricó, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba.

50. López 1991, p. 6, quoted in Sandoval 2008. Aricó's friend Sinesio López Jiménez studied sociology at the Universidad de San Marcos in Lima and then did his doctoral studies at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris under the supervision of Alain Touraine. A university professor of long and distinguished experience, he was also director of the Biblioteca Nacional del Perú (2001–5) and the *Diario de Marka* (1982–4), for which he also wrote a political column. The historian Alberto Tito Flores Galindo was born in Callao on 28 May 1949. He was one of the most distinguished intellectuals among the Peruvian socialist milieu in the 1970s and '80s. His extensive *oeuvre* includes *Los*

As Pablo Sandoval recently highlighted, the impact of this was a substantial one, extending to the field of the leftist intellectuals who 'hegemonised' Peruvian social sciences at the time and were trying to distance themselves from Marxism-Leninism. For evidence of this, one might look at Aricó's own articles published in the journal *Socialismo y participación* or the interviews he gave to the journal *Quehacer*, but above all the influence that he had on leftist intellectuals like Sinesio López, Alberto Adrianzén, Carlos Iván Degregori and Rolando Ames, intellectuals who renewed socialist thought in Peru in the pages of the journal *Marka*, in the *Diario de Marka* newspaper, in its cultural supplement (*El caballo rojo*) and later in the journal *El zorro de abajo*.⁵¹

The initial result of this exchange was Carlos Franco's offer to publish Aricó's works in Lima, including the first mention of an 'essay on Marx and Latin America' that could make up part of a book together with his contribution on Mariátegui.⁵² Their agenda was a multi-faceted one, including raising support for *Controversia* through subscriptions, projects for a Latin-American-wide journal and discussion forum, and a number of political contacts.⁵³ There was further advance in terms of organising a seminar on Mariátegui, which took place in early 1980 in Culiacán, in the Mexican state of Sinaloa. Furthermore, close links developed with Oscar Terán and with Oscar del Barco, who at that time had just published his polemical work on Lenin.

Following the successful Sinaloa meeting, in April 1980 the CEDEP approved publication of Aricó's book, together with a special issue of *Socialismo y participación* devoted to Mariátegui. Aricó took charge of preparing the collection of documents – which, according to Franco, he ought to see 'as the product of your interest and work over many years in relation to Mariátegui'⁵⁴ – in addition to his own specific contribution.⁵⁵ Franco finished his introduction in June 1980;

Mineros de la Cerro de Pasco (1974), *Arequipa y el sur andino* (1977), *Apogeo y crisis de la República Aristocrática* (1978, with Manuel Burga), *La agonía de Mariátegui* (1980), *Aristocracia y plebe* (1984) and *Buscando un Inca. Identidad y utopía en los Andes*, a text for which he won the Casa de las Américas prize (essays) in 1986, and whose importance continues to grow. He was the founder and driving force behind SUR and the Casa de estudios para el socialismo, with which he promoted the journal *Márgenes*. He died on 26 March 1990.

51. Sandoval 2008.

52. Carlos Franco, letter to José Aricó, Lima, 13 September 1979, in Archivo Aricó, Correspondencia, Box 1, Biblioteca José María Aricó, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba.

53. This project led to discussions with the Venezuelan MAS and with Darcy Ribiero. See Carlos Franco, letter to José Aricó, Lima, 21 December 1979, in Archivo Aricó, Correspondencia, Box 1, Biblioteca José María Aricó, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba.

54. Carlos Franco, letter to José Aricó, Lima, 23 June 1980, in Archivo Aricó, Correspondencia, Box 1, Biblioteca José María Aricó, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba.

55. Carlos Franco, letter to José Aricó, Lima, 6 May, in Archivo Aricó, Correspondencia, Box 1, Biblioteca José María Aricó, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba. For Aricó's contribution, see Aricó 1981.

the book appeared immediately afterwards, and in August of that year, Aricó again visited Lima to promote and give meetings on it.

One of the first reviews of Aricó's book appeared in the 'Kaleidoscope' section of the Lima weekly *Equis X*, under the byline of the writer José B. Adolph.⁵⁶ This piece, in spite of its brevity and journalistic character, was one of the most incisive commentaries produced at the time. It was an adept reading, in that it drew on some of Aricó's main structuring arguments, and was written from a perspective that stressed the particular character of society and politics in Latin America: precisely what was lacking in Marx. The author of the review picked up on this, Marx's *refusal to see*, the struggle between two or more Marxes. The starting point of his commentary is to see the book through the prism of the 'central question of the revolutionary socialism of our time: that of revolutionary subjects (or actors)', together with a consideration of the state of Latin-American Marxism, 'held prisoner by the dogma of a lethal anachronism', a true 'ideology' in the most pejorative Marxist sense of that word. Adolph identified Marxism 'as the apotheosis of the bourgeois system', in the sense that in the Latin-American countries – if considered to be among the 'backward countries', and consistent with a historical schema of linear development held to be universally valid – quoting Aricó, 'it became the surest basis for accepting the necessity and progressive character of capitalism.' In recognising the importance of the ideas expressed in Aricó book with regard to the about-turn Marx carried out in his considerations on Asiatic societies and his analyses of Ireland and the Russian rural commune – now turning against his own linear schema – the reviewer posed the question of whether this represented not a 'correction', but rather a 'deviation' by the author of *Capital* from his own fundamental ideas, essentially motivated by the European proletariat's failure to fulfil its historic revolutionary mission. Adolph's reading, as we can see, was not an fawning one: apart from the adjectives 'weighty' and 'enthraling' applied to a work full of 'intelligence and shine' the review's author asked himself, not without a little sarcasm, if he was not being led 'under the illustrious guidance of Professor Aricó and others... down a path of conceptual and analytical desperation, faced with the now-age-old handicap socialism has suffered from birth'.

56. José Bernardo Adolph (1933–2008) was a writer of German origin, whose family fled from Nazi persecution to Peruvian exile in 1938. He was devoted to science-fiction. See José B. Adolph's 'Latinoamérica: escollo de Marx', in *Equis X*: there is a photocopy of this review-article in the Archivo Aricó, although unfortunately without the dates of publication, issue number or page number. The clearest reference to it appears in a letter written by Franco – 'In *Equis X* there was a commentary on it by José Adolph...' – in a context implying that it had only very recently appeared. See Carlos Franco, letter to José Aricó, 17 October 1980, in Archivo Aricó, Correspondencia, Box 1, Biblioteca José María Aricó, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba.

Other commentaries surrounding the publication of the book and the interview in *Marka* began to appear in Lima.⁵⁷ The Partido Comunista Peruano weekly *Unidad* published vehement polemics against Aricó, produced by Ricardo Luna Vegas, a prolific writer on the *oeuvre* of 'El Amauta' Mariátegui.⁵⁸ *Marka* published the first two chapters of the book,⁵⁹ while *El caballo rojo* responded to the *Unidad* articles.

Gabriel Vargas Lozano wrote a review for *El machete*,⁶⁰ the journal of the renewal tendency of the Partido Comunista Mexicano, and this initiated the international spread of Aricó's book's public reception. A piece by Julio Ortega also published in Mexico City in July 1981 stressed, in a piece intended to show the vibrancy of the Peruvian publishing industry in the early 1980s, that Aricó's book was an 'essay... that has been widely discussed, in an apt response to the provocative and hyperbolic readings' he had observed.⁶¹ He drew from it a call for a Latin-American assimilation of Marxism in the footsteps of 'Mariátegui's early synthesis', which for Ortega implied the overcoming of reductive and non-specific readings.

In mid-1982 the second edition of *Marx y América Latina* was published in Mexico City, as well as a Brazilian-Portuguese translation.⁶² Thus began its wider, longer journey, and an influence that has lasted ever since.

57. Aricó 1980b.

58. Luna Vegas 1980a; 1980b; and 1980c. Luna Vegas's articles were extremely aggressive in their treatment of Aricó and his CEDEP friends. An intervention by Jorge del Prado, general secretary of the Partido Comunista Peruano, calmed the row and put an end to the campaign against Aricó. However, Luna Vegas then continued his campaign by means of books and pamphlets: see Luna Vegas (ed.) 1980d; Luna Vegas 1975; 1978; 1981; 1984; 1985; and 1989.

59. Aricó 1980c.

60. Vargas Lozano 1981. Aricó read this review with some diligence and underlined both the points of agreement and disagreement, particularly the issue of the state/civil-society relation in Hegel and the question of the 'residues of Hegel and the critique of Bonapartism wherever he found it'. His copy can be found in the Archivo Aricó, Biblioteca José María Aricó, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba.

61. Ortega 1981.

62. Aricó 1982b.

Introduction

Carlos Franco

The text in your hands is, in my view, a foundational text. In the first place, because it establishes on the terrain of theoretical reflection a problem observed by the mind in political practice: the disconnection between Latin America and Marxism. Its transformation into an object of theory required its being classified as a *historical* disconnection. Indeed, it is this characterisation that allows the disconnection to be established as a theoretical question.

What do we mean by this? The relations between reality and theory are spontaneously conflictual. It is precisely in the spontaneous character of the conflict that the autonomy of the one and the other is defined. The autonomy of each, needless to say, rises off the back of their mutual irreducibility, just as their constant identification overcomes, at a cognitive level, the 'necessity' of the one and the other. But their mutual irreducibility, the condition of the existence of each, is only *one* condition of their relationship. The other, just as important, is their mutual attraction. Reality needs theory to express itself, and theory needs practice for its realisation. As such, their identification-in-passing is a condition of the existence of each. If this encounter does not take place, it is because the theory is not the theory of *this* reality and the reality is not the reality of *this* theory. Following this reasoning, the conflict between Latin America and Marxism becomes of theoretical concern when practice draws attention to a constant disconnection, the two fated to a sharp mutual repulsion, one that excludes Latin America from Marxism

(meaning, reality from theory) and that excludes Marxism from Latin America (meaning, theory from reality).¹ Taking account of the historic, systematic reality of this mutual repulsion is thus the means by which Aricó can establish the problem as an object of theoretical reflection.

However, Aricó's text is also foundational for a second reason, in that he identifies the origin of this disconnection *within* Marx's writings. The problem, then, is not rooted in 'Marxism' (or in Marxisms) but rather has roots in Marx's own thought. He needs to avoid two traps, here: the first, of defining the disconnection as the expression of an error of 'application' in Marx's thought; the second, that of explaining it in terms of a lack of 'adaptation'. While the notion of 'application' is based on the supposition of a complete and self-sufficient Marxism, meaning, a theory and methodology prior and exterior to the reality in which it must be realised, the notion of 'adaptation', apparently respecting the jurisdiction of reality, implies that Marxism is a vessel that can be filled with all sorts of content. The former makes Marxism an expression of blind arrogance; the latter confuses it with the absolute. But much as each of these 'explanations' have, over the years, demonstrated their inability to bring about a contradictory and creative encounter between Marxism and Latin America (the only means of correspondence between theory and practice that could reveal its 'theoretical effectiveness') then they become mere anachronistic labels or mystifying descriptions.

To arrive at the point where we can see Marx as the explanation for the disconnection, Aricó had to carry out two operations. The first was to reconstruct the historical development of the establishment of Marxism in Latin America. The second was to make Marx the historical object of Marxist thought in Latin America.

Reconstructing the history of the formation of Marxism in Latin America was not exclusively a methodological necessity, but also, and perhaps more significantly, Aricó's 'settling of accounts' with his own political and intellectual practice.

While his immediate motivation was the need to put together an article on the relations between the Third International and Latin America for a book published in Italy in 1973,² to me it seems clear that his readiness to address this concern derived from his awareness of the problems that the reality of his country and of Latin America posed to official Marxism's ability to understand it theoretically. Since its failure to understand was *historically* constituted, Aricó had to depart from the theoretical perplexity of the self-defined Marxist parties,

1. We are referring, for the moment, to Marx's thought and a certain supposed 'official' Marxism. We are not referring to Marxism as a 'cultural horizon'.

2. See Aricó 1973.

infiltrate the private reserve of the documents of the Third International, cut through the discourse of the Second International, and finally reach the beginning: the thought of Marx. This meant not only understanding the distinct historical process of the establishment of Marxism in Latin America, as compared to in Europe, but also to give account of this process starting from the continent's distinct paths of social development. Here, as we see, Aricó was differentiating between the thought of Marx and the historical process by which 'Marxism' formed in our continent, a difference that, as we know, can only be understood within the more global framework of the process of differentiating between Marx's original texts and the worldwide establishment of Marxism by socialists and communists. This clearly puts on the agenda the question of the complex relations between the texts of Marx and the interpretations that constitute its 'historical expression' in the name of Marxism. These relations were never transparent, and gradually became an object of theoretical reflection. The so-called 'crisis of Marxism' here meets with a theme whose elucidation is undoubtedly more useful than the interminable discussions between the different interpreters of the original texts. In analysing this theme, Aricó considered it necessary to promote public knowledge of the original texts and of the development of the various currents of thought that call themselves Marxist. To this end, he developed, together with the *Pasado y Presente* group, the most audacious and most important publishing effort concerning Marxist thought ever carried out in Latin America. It generated a critical mass of information and reflections that, sooner rather than later, expressed itself in a new manner, a new style, a different quality of Marxist thought, in relation to both Marx's own thought and to the reality of Latin-American socio-political development. However, any interested person who draws closer to the copious amount of literature 'discovered' by *Pasado y Presente* can, in a certain sense, reconstruct the stages of Aricó's own thought. Although our current concern is not to demonstrate this journey, we do want to briefly advance some observations as hypotheses that may be useful to understanding the text we here preface.

I believe that Aricó had to discover almost completely afresh the difference between Marx's thought and that which we know as Marxism, and as such to recognise the different historical determinations that we find in the origins of the one and the other. But these determinations can only be expressed theoretically in discourses that are at once distinct and united by the claim to a relationship with the original Marx if, indeed, the thought expressed in his writings created the conditions for 'Marxism'. In other words, if Marx's writings were 'open' texts. With this term I am not only making reference to the multiple meanings derived from his readers' encounter with his *oeuvre*, and in this sense the meanings that any work can produce in its relations with its readers. I am referring, rather, to

the real supports that the different interpretations of Marx can find in the content of his thought. Where this occurs it is because, even beyond the ambiguous character of some of his central categories, and even beyond the incomplete nature of his reflection, this reflection developed as a process not only directed by changing, external historical demands (the chopping and changing of reality) but also by the different cognitive orientations, the intellectual mutations that gave fresh focus and meaning to the innermost contours of his thought. That Aricó was aware of this is evidenced by the manner in which he brings into relief the different stages in the development of Marx's reflection.

But the recognition of the differentiated and changing course of development of Marx's thought could not happen without a prior change of attitude and, indeed, position towards it. I am alluding to psychological and theoretical implications such as the following:

First, for a Marxist to turn Marx's thought into an object of investigation implies a challenging yet real break in the subjective attachment that ties (if not enchains) the one to the other. This occurs not only by means of the psychological distance from the object of study that any investigation requires as its necessary condition. Rather, I am thinking of the lack of certainty associated with the conversion of Marx into a 'problematic' and the elaboration of interpretative hypotheses that, as such, are rational wagers in the uncertain field of probabilities.

Second, an investigation that is not simply textual, but contextual, demands restoring Marx to his proper context: the intellectual coordinates of his society, his culture and his civilisation. In other words, it implies a process of relativising his positions and recasting the dimensions of his historical and theoretical role. With this perspective in mind, Aricó had to experience the curious sensation whereby, at the same time as his increasing closeness to the internal dynamic of Marx's thought, he was also 'distancing himself' towards the past in order to situate himself in Marx's period. But the process that restores Marx to his own time simultaneously alters his relations to the present and the future. In other words, it posed the problem of how far his discourse was consistent with the present situation of our societies and the significance of the hypotheses that emerged in his works for current and future paths of historical development.

Third, once the points of rupture and realignment in Marx's discourse have been identified, these must inevitably be related to the diverse 'Marxisms'. Now, these cannot be seen simply as the product of socio-historical conditions that led them to privilege one or another 'side' or 'dimension' of Marx's thought. What we mean is that, if indeed the different historical processes by which Marx's thought and the socialist and communist movements were created did condition the differences we can observe, it is evident that these can also be explained

within the very process of development of his thought. As such, once we have arrived at this point it is necessary to ask ourselves if speaking of *the* thought of Marx is not a means of obscuring with a too-neat formula the existence of *successive* Marxes. This in turn poses the question of whether the effort to define his thought is better served by a perspective that explains its development through the prism of the 'unfurling' of a prior, originally-established theoretical strand, or by another that, recognising discontinuous theoretical strands set down in different moments of his reflection, poses the ruptures (and their study) not only as the richest and most challenging intellectual stimuli, but also as the best methodological orientation for responding to the question under consideration. This analytical perspective leads, in turn, to rooting the historical Marxisms not on the edges of a discourse essentially the same throughout all its stages of development, but rather in the central path of Marx's reflection in a given period, to the point of being able to classify them according to one or another stage.

None of this demands abandoning an examination of the differences between the historical Marxisms in terms of the particular socio-historical conditions in which they emerged and developed. Rather, we think that this perspective is complementary with our own. But we believe that the approach we have outlined, whose far-reaching methodological and theoretical consequences for a wide range of themes appear obvious to us, can give an impulse for us to overcome the deadlock of the current debates.

Fourth, for a study oriented in this manner, it is necessary to pay attention to the totality of Marx's writings and to recognise that he did not fully express his thought in any one work or set of works. This means, then, a divergence with the usual fashion of considering his works, instead beginning by classifying them in terms of their relation to the different theoretical strands that defined the 'stages' of the writer's thought-process. In this sense, the texts that attract Aricó's attention – the writings on Ireland, Russia and Turkey, his letter to Vera Zasulich, among others – correspond to a stage, or express a theoretical strand (a system of intellectual orientation and methodological focus) that is not the same, for example, as that expressed in those texts often labelled 'Eurocentric' (his early writings on Mexico, those dedicated to India in the 1850s, or certain passages of *Capital*). However, the texts to which Aricó turns his attention did not figure in the interests of the later 'Marxist' movement. This 'occurrence' not only requires explanation in terms of the socio-historical conditions of the socialist and communist movement, which conditioned this 'blindness' towards them, but also poses the question of the lost Marxes, meaning those whose footprints have been hidden beneath the successive 'geological' layers overlaid by the historical practices by which the Marxist 'political' movement developed. Rosa Luxemburg was probably referring to this when she alluded to the successive revelations of

Marx's thought made possible by the successive developments in the historical practice of revolutionary movement. Understanding the dynamic of this relationship also helps us to understand those Marxist theoretical journeys literally buried by the course of history, only to be rediscovered in more recent years. Here we are referring to the thought of Luxemburg, Korsch and Gramsci, amongst others; no coincidence, then, that *Pasado y Presente* disseminated their works.

Fifth, wrapped up in the theme just mentioned is the problem of identifying as a Marxist. In other words, the question of the meaning of 'being' or calling oneself a Marxist. The identity of Marx himself, in revealing the discontinuous realignments in his thought – as he turned between a series of distinct theoretical strands – serves to undermine any idea of a permanent, consistent, homogeneous basis on which to construct a Marxist identity. This is proven by the critical differences of philosophy, methodology and politics that divide the groups and movements supposedly 'united' by their common assertion of a 'Marxist' identity; the need for adjectives to qualify (and thus to differentiate) the type or tendency of Marxism upheld; and, finally, the strange discomfort sparked amongst the most nuanced Marxists when asked to put a name to their theory. Developing all this, the following tangential points may be useful:

- a) The theoretical identity of Marxists cannot be grounded in their modern-day affinity with Marx's political judgements on the phenomena of his own era: not only because the *time* of these phenomena is not the same as ours, but because the *phenomena* of that time are not our own. On the other hand, any political judgement relies on both perceptible reality and the theoretical and methodological approach used to understand it. As such, the claim to any 'Marxist' theoretical identity has to be situated at the level of an identification with Marx's *theory*.
- b) But any theory – as a systematic combination of formulations on the historical reality that is its object – entails, as Aricó highlights in his text, a 'rational kernel'; that is to say, a mode of existence of the real that not only makes this theory intelligible, but moreover able to organise on this basis a combination of formulations on the relations between phenomena over time. It is not possible to establish a supposed 'scientific' theory on the foundations of the rule of contingency and chance. Marx was surely referring to this when he said that is not sufficient for the concept to strive to live up to reality, but rather that this reality, through its 'regularity', must live up to the given concepts. In every sense of the word, each 'regularity' is historical, and so too (and as a consequence) is the rational kernel of theory. By this we mean to suggest that the combination of categories, laws and hypotheses that constitute Marx's theory are inevitably historical, and as such, while effective in describing and

explaining the historical reality Marx was surrounded by, lose their soundness when applied to other historical realities, which inherently have different modes of existence of the real and different 'regularities'. The fact that Marx himself perceived the relationship between theory and reality thusly is evidenced by the realignment in his system of theoretical orientation when the focus of his reflection shifted from the Western and European capitalism led by England to the Asiatic and colonial – or simply colonial – reality. Understanding this relationship thus allows us to understand the realignments in Marx's thought and the changes in the 'rational kernels' that define his shifts from one stage of development to the next. Moreover, this explains why there is a disconnection in the significance of the categories and logic that emerge in Marx's reflection on European capitalist reality, when applied to the realities and historical paths taken by non-Western or 'backward' societies (to use a 'Eurocentric' term). Just as these societies, through their distinct 'regularity' and 'rationality' do not live up to the concepts elaborated in and for a different reality, they risk being characterised as 'contingent', 'a matter of chance', 'accidental' or 'haphazard' by anyone who approaches them with an 'external' theoretical arsenal. This partly explains Marx's theoretical stance not only towards Bolivar, but, indeed, towards Latin America itself. But to take such a perspective would seriously limit the possibility of today identifying theoretically with the *explicit* categories, laws and hypotheses Marx elaborated in relation to the historical realities he studied. If this is true, then a third possible means of theoretical identification with Marx must exist: affinity with his *method*.

- c) However, the *real* 'method' employed by Marx (like any method of study in general) was elaborated in order to give account of a given historical reality, and demonstrates its effectiveness only insofar as it reveals the most inherent regularities of this reality. Only in this sense does a method of investigation lay the basis for the *political method that might transform* this reality. As such, both types of method are instrumental in character, which thus turns us back to the specific historical situation for which they are developed and in relation to which they must be evaluated. A change in the historical scenario, of the specific reality, and the methodological developments arising from the levels of the real neglected by Marx or that have since revealed their importance, thus limit the possibilities of today identifying with Marx, much as in the case of his 'theory'. Admittedly, at the level of methodology, *as well as of theory*, the identification with Marx is sustained by the *general* orientations of his thought. But this identification only resolves the problem in name, because the 'Marxist' test of a 'theory' or 'methodology' is not posed at this level, but rather that of the historical specificity of the real. As such, no-one

can resolve the theoretical and methodological problems they face in the historical reality of their time (or their claim to 'Marxism') in any manner other than the *active creation* of a specific theory and methodology. This creative effort demands a break with intellectual habits and conventional attitudes, and, as such, with the Marx 'we know'.

Having got this far, I must recognise that I do not know if I am inferring this line of argument from conversations with Aricó, more than from the text, or, indeed, if it is an abusive imposition of a process of reflection that is really more my own, but in his name. In any case, it allows us to get a grip on the ambiguity – and, moreover, get a clearer view of the inner meaning – of Aricó's claim to Marxism. Indeed, I believe it necessary to deduce the following from this affiliation:

That for Aricó (or perhaps only for me), identification with Marx only has meaning if it is expressed in the active search for the internal dynamic of Marx's thought that led him to realign his cognitive orientation, change his reference framework, and alter the coordinates by which he understood the objects of his theory. To identify with Marx, then, does not in fact demand adherence to his political judgements, his theory (or theories, or strands of theory, or the rational kernels involved in each 'stage' of his thought), or his methodology. All these are posed as mere traces, hints, paths that lead to a problematic Marx, a Marx that can be built through inference. Furthermore, in this context, he means the hidden sense of 'being a Marxist': that of turning to face reality and finding Marx in his discontinuity, in the series of ruptures in his thought. It was probably for this very reason that I would ever more frequently hear Aricó saying that, for him, Marxism is a moment of rupture with intellectual convention and political inertia.

As such, the best proof of any claim to Marxism is *the production of Marxism* (to describe it in the same terms as does a recent article by Robert Paris),³ that is to say, the definition of not only an object of theory, but essentially of a new system of theoretical, methodological and political orientation. This can only be created in relation to a given national reality; or rather, a historically specific reality in whose innermost nature we can find its roots and its potential and actual bases for development.

For me, all this leads to a *dissolution of Marxism* or, to put it better, of the often-advanced image of a 'complete' Marx. Making the successive realignments of Marx's thought, its ruptures with political and intellectual practice, and the theoretical framework arising from his original encounter with historically specific realities, into the essence of Marxism means to define its orthodoxy by its

3. Paris 1983.

heterodoxy, its unity by its differences, to affirm it by negating or overcoming it. To put it more succinctly: to kill the father in his own name, or to identify oneself with the family home at the same time as abandoning it. As Héctor Béjar said to me when he read this last expression, the problem for Marxists is that 'it's cold outside'.

Beyond the (deliberate) impressionism of my last few sentences, I believe that the basic problem that results for Marxists from what we have discussed is the ambiguity of Marx's legacy. Marxism, following this line of argument, is the name given to theoretical diversity; but then we lose any substantially coherent base on which to ground it. And if, to answer this objection, we recall that the expression 'Marxism' refers to a combination of general theoretical and methodological orientations for the purpose of understanding 'reality' (and equally 'historical realities'), then, given the growing degree of generalisation of this orientation in non-Marxist theoretical systems, ultimately this combination cannot clearly delimit its boundaries. Moreover, I think that the manner in which Aricó characterises Marx remains a matter of dispute (assuming the hypothesis that my conjectures on his way of thinking about Marxism are accurate) since referring to his capacity to decouple and realign his thought in accordance with reality means to define it either according to his cognitive process, his underlying psychological and theoretical attitude, or the human and intellectual values entailed by his implicit stance towards the real. These, in reality, are characteristics of *any* creative thought. As such, they alone are not exclusively identifiable with Marx, and therefore cannot sustain a claim to 'Marxism', if our intention in using this label is to denote a 'clear and distinct' reality. None of this means downplaying the extraordinary richness of Aricó's approach, which can provide a solid basis for a position intellectually independent among the 'Marxisms': the only way, I believe, of turning Marx into the active catalyst for new and creative theoretical advances. Nor do I believe that this course of reflection makes it impossible to establish any claim to 'Marxism'; it simply draws attention to the need to develop another line of argument to this end.

To understand Marx and Marxism in the terms that I am attributing to Aricó thus establishes their theoretical and subjective independence and explains the type of approach, both inquisitive and challenging, that is expressed in the text. This approach seeks to identify the gaps, the blind spots, the dead ends in Marx's thought. Following this line of argument, we only begin to *do* Marxism when we abandon the father and run away from the family home; in other words, when we take back or affirm afresh our individual theoretical identity. For Aricó to call this 'Marxism' is, I believe, simply a means of maintaining a symbolic attachment to his origins, a recourse to the place where he began the process of developing his own particular theoretical approach.

This text is foundational, finally, because it represents one of the first attempts (if not *the* first) to reconstruct the DNA of the internal conditions of Marx's discourse that prevented him from discovering the historical specificity of Latin America.

The impediment in Marx's thought with regard to our continent has – rather conveniently – been labelled 'Eurocentric'. This would, then, apparently explain the 'misinformation', 'evasion' and the 'disparaging' attitude with which he supposedly related to the Latin-American societies of his time. But aided by an erudite and refined knowledge of Marx's texts, a recognition of the Western view of Latin America in Marx's time and a classification of the stages of development in his thought, one-by-one Aricó pulls apart the assumptions behind this interpretative approach and demonstrates its inability to account for the defining theoretical factors informing Marx's position. While recognising that Marx misread the Asiatic and Latin-American phenomena (for instance, the 1848 text saying that he 'rejoiced' at the occupation of Mexican territories by the United States; his 1854 letter to Engels where he disdainfully attacks the character of Mexicans; his allusion to the civilising nature of English rule in India; or the introduction to *Capital* in which he presents capitalist industrial development as prefiguring the development of other countries; to name but a few) he shows that such a misunderstanding must be analysed from the perspective of the evolution of Marx's thought. In this sense, Aricó brings out the importance of texts that, whether by chance or by design, barely attracted the attention of those who criticised his Eurocentrism: his writings on Ireland, Russia, China and Turkey, among others. Aricó sees these texts as the expression of a rupture, a realignment of Marx's system of orientation, which had until then been based on the perspective of analysing capitalism through the prism of its English, European and Western mould. This perspective, in trying to capture the elusive historical specificity of the 'non-Western' world using an imported theoretical framework, may give some substance to the critique of 'Eurocentrism'. But the change of perspective involved in applying his analytical tools to a 'non-European' reality allows Marx to build a distinct theoretical framework that not only accounts for 'non-Western' historical specificity but also allows him to re-elaborate his global vision of historical development. As we see, here we touch on the very heart of the question of Marx's 'Eurocentrism', since this alludes to 'applying' or 'attempt to apply' the theoretical framework built on his study of European reality to different historical processes and societal realities. Having perceived the change in Marx's perspective, Aricó is thus in a position to question the explanation of his blindness on Latin America in terms of 'Eurocentrism'.

But... let us examine this further.

According to Aricó, the change in Marx's analytical perspective was expressed in the conceptions that he developed, mainly if not exclusively, with regard to Ireland. These can be summarised roughly as follows:

- a) A rejection of the attempt to transform Marx's analysis of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into a historico-philosophical theory that predicts the development of all societies in all historical circumstances they might encounter (see, for instance, his 1877 letter to the Russian journal *Otechestvennye Zapiski*).⁴
- b) Recognition of the uneven and contradictory character of the economic development of the Western and non-Western world and their conflictual interdependence. Recognition, therefore, of the subordination of the process of accumulating surpluses in non-European countries to that of European ones, and the colonial character of the political ties between them.
- c) A prediction that the revolutionary process's centre of gravity would shift from the Western world to the non-Western world, and defining the national revolutions in the dependent countries as a condition of the social revolution in European countries.
- d) An examination of the historical possibility of non-capitalist countries passing to socialism without necessarily having had a capitalist stage of transition.
- e) Identification, particularly in the case of Russia, of peasant communal institutions as the axis for the passage of non-capitalist societies to socialism.
- f) Recognition of the distinct historical subjects of the revolutionary movement in Asiatic and/or colonial societies (the peasantry, intellectuals, the petty bourgeoisie, the embryonic working class) as compared to those of European capitalist societies.
- g) An affirmation of the distinct nature of the tasks that must be fulfilled in order to transform Asiatic and/or colonial societies (political independence, agrarian revolution, state-protection of trade and industry) as compared to those posed in European capitalist societies.

As we see, these perspectives represent a far-reaching change in Marx's earlier framework of reference and the orientation of his thought. Aricó makes use of this – if not only this – to challenge the charge of Eurocentrism levelled 'against Marx'; second, to affirm that Marx had at his disposal a combination of theoretical and methodological tools sufficient for understanding Latin America. However, I believe that the change that Aricó denotes within Marx only serves to

4. Marx 1975–2004a.

undermine the charge of Eurocentrism with respect to Asiatic colonial countries and oppressed European nations, and only supports the argument that Marx had the theoretical and methodological tools necessary for an analysis of Latin-American reality to the extent that it is similar to that of these countries. In terms of Latin America's historical specificity, Marx's tools were not merely limited but, in the last instance, crucially lacking. Among other things, the small matter that Latin-American societies were not, or else had ceased to be, a *colonial* reality. As a result, without what should have been fundamental for Marx – namely, the historical specificity of Latin America and the need to address it with a distinct theoretical frame – the analytical tools he developed with regard to colonial societies did not save him from ultimately ‘collapsing back into’ his initial, Eurocentric theoretical orientation. As Aricó himself highlights (if in a different context), the historical specificity of Latin America is rooted in the unique relation between the processes of constructing the nation and the state. As we see, here I am referring to processes that are *core* to the historical constitution of societies; *multifaceted*, to the extent that they condition the process of class formation *from the outset*; and of *long duration*. As such, they structure the conditions *within* which it becomes possible to employ Marx's categories (no matter at what stage of his thought they may have been created). By this we mean to say that Marx's categories refer to economic and political phenomena *that operate in the context of a determinate historical resolution of the relations between nation and state*. Thus they do not cover these relations, but rather entail them. This is another way of saying that Marx did not develop a theory of the development of these processes. The approximations (and no more than that) that he did make were either situated in precapitalist historical contexts (‘precapitalist formations’) or else in European reality (as in the relations between civil society and political society in the writings of the young Marx). But in either case, these processes did not represent a systematic object of his attention. As such, Marx ran serious risk of assuming that the form these relations took in Western Europe was a constant and/or an invariable. However, the specific resolution that European history gave to such relations had a meaning and importance specific to the phenomena addressed by Marx's categorial framework, and that *because of this framework*. Here, I believe, we must identify not only Marx's ‘blindness’ with regard to the form that relations between nation and state assumed in Latin America, but also the inadequacy of his analytical categories for understanding the economic and political phenomena that emerged within the framework of this form. I think that it is for this reason that Latin-American realities do not ‘live up to’ Marx's categories and why these categories do not sufficiently approximate to those realities. The constant use of the prefixes semi (feudal) and pre (capitalist) to give account of the undeniable specificity of the character

of the processes in Latin America (which in reality were about as effective as if we employed them to explain a woman's pregnancy) is an example (and only one example) of this *impasse* (also illustrated by the problems deriving from his use of expressions such as the 'bourgeois class' and 'proletariat' to denote the particular 'classes' of Latin America).

But in relation to all this, I believe it possible to advance the hypothesis that, if Marx's analysis of Asiatic colonial societies and oppressed European nations did not itself demonstrate this theoretical shortfall, then this is because, in a sense that I cannot here define precisely, to some extent common to all of them was a given level of national development, a greater level of national integration.

This national integration, closer to the reality of the European capitalist countries than the Latin-American ones, could lead Marx to believe or assume that their conversion into independent states would develop along the same lines as the European model, in which the state 'crowns' (whether in the sense of formalising, institutionalising, augmenting or consummating) the nation. If this is accurate, then we do not have to identify some residue of Hegelianism or antagonism towards Bonaparte as the origin of Marx's theoretical blindness regarding Latin-American societies: rather, we can explain these theoretical 'excrescences' in his thought in terms of his own shortfalls or by the mark left on him by his own historical surroundings. Even then, the charge of Eurocentrism would still stand, even if in something other than the traditional sense.

However, in a sense this hypothesis does have some basis if we consider the influence of the concepts of 'non-historic' and 'vital' societies and nations in Marx. If the 'historicity' or 'vitality' of a people is proven, in the last analysis, by a nation's capacity for a state, then the Asiatic movements, that is to say, movements developing in ancient, nationally-integrated societies, should culminate (or should be seen as culminating) in the formation of states. Bearing all the different variants in mind, this relationship between nation and state is again closer to the European model than the Latin-American one. As such, to the extent that these realities were more 'accessible' to Marx's theory than our own continent's were, his 'Eurocentrism' was not a matter of inevitability. This can only be demonstrated by means of an ambiguous historical process: that is to say, one that cannot be reduced to the theoretical framework used by Marx. In the last analysis, the ambiguities of Latin America (the multi-ethnic composition of the masses, élites foreign to the body of the population, a low level of national integration, artificial states, power-crises, and so on) put pressure on Marx's ability to decouple his thought and on his disposition to realign his theory to a fresh problematic field. Here, Marx demonstrates something that psychologists call 'intolerance of ambiguity', the fate of being horrified by anything that challenges or questions all the coordinates by which we have developed our understanding

of the real. Not only were his coordinates set out in accordance with the particular shape that the relationship between nation and state took on in Europe, but moreover these also coloured his conception of politics, the state, classes, and, in reality, the innermost contours of the processes of history. The fact that Marx did not perceive the 'regularities' of Latin-American reality cannot be explained by saying that these did not exist, but rather by the perspective from which he analysed them. It was thus not a problem of Latin-American reality, but of his perception of this reality. But if the 'fault' lay in his outlook, then it is necessary to stress that the Latin-American object of inquiry posed a threat to his outlook. For me at least, on this level it is thus clear that the historical processes of creating states (or, in some regions, nations) precede and contribute towards defining the meaning, degree and shape of the emergence and development of classes and their conflicts, political life and its terrain, institutions and their power, and social consciousness and the movements that express it. As such, these processes represent the theoretical object *starting from which* we can begin to understand them. If this does not happen – if we rearrange the priorities of our inquiry, analysing the outcomes and disregarding the processes involved – then we run the risk of failing to recognise the regularities of the society that we are studying, grounding our theoretical and methodological tools only within the *logic and semantics* of the underlying historical relationship between nation and state. In this sense, Marx's categorial framework, arising from the encounter between a set of phenomena situated in a particular resolution of this relationship, inevitably reproduced it, and, as such, was inadequate to understanding the Latin-American historical reality of his time.

However, inherent to the European resolution of the relationship between nation and state was a particular articulation of economics and politics by which the nation was the 'ultimate source' of the state. Politics, implying the state, became a product of the economy, implying civil society. And as such, it ceased to have any original and exclusive determinant power. While Marx could recognise this fact in his concrete studies, certainly he did not elaborate a system of *autonomous political* categories such that he could have situated the phenomena of reality in their proper context, or, indeed, identified the determinations of political society. This plays an important role in explaining the shortfalls of Marx's approach towards Latin America in terms of its uselessness when faced with the nuances of the process that 'descended from the heavens' onto this continent. Aricó had a sharp perception of these problems in Marx's conceptions, but preferred to locate them within the framework of his clashes with Hegel and Bonaparte. This does certainly help to explain why Marx's analysis ignores Latin America; but at the cost of distinguishing what was 'actually' his thought from what he inherited from Hegel (even if I do believe that this is open to discussion).

Finally, I would like to confide in the reader concerning a curious sensation I felt growing inside me as I progressed through the book. Everything was as if, beyond the arguments themselves, Aricó was surprised to be engaged in an intense conflict with a certain Marx, or with the colours in which he was painting all of the independent Marxists' thought. Although I am sure Aricó will not agree with what I am writing, to me he seemed to be describing, through his ever-more incisive analysis and habit of returning to themes he had already addressed with new reflections, the expression of a thought that had achieved its own autonomy. As he later confirmed to me, his initial ideas changed in the course of writing the text. This is what gives it both its ambiguity and its extraordinary richness. In this sense, I think that the plurality of meanings in this text, whose theoretical importance is clear, will give rise to different interpretations of both Marx's thought on Latin America and the analytical perspective used by Aricó. Perhaps this will be particularly noticeable in terms of what are, for me, ambiguous interpretations of Marx's Eurocentrism and the Rosa Luxemburg text cited. Although I am not sure on this point (and however unimportant this may be) I think that Aricó's study is imbued by the conflict between a liberated theoretical approach and an emotional resistance to any rupture. The real meaning of this murky reference will perhaps become clearer if I add that, each time Aricó has told me that Marxism is his cultural horizon, I can only wonder what his inner horizon is.

Preface to the First Edition

The present essay was originally intended to form part of a book we are working on, concerning the 'diffusion' of Marxism in the process of the formation of Latin-American socialism. What was at first a simple sketch devoted to presenting the paradox of the evasion of our continent in Marx's thought, then became vastly wider in scope and turned into a relatively independent essay, in all senses impossible to include as another chapter of the planned book, given its length. This is the reason why we have acceded to the request of the Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Participación (CEDEP) comrades and accepted their suggestion of publishing this essay as a separate volume.

A first, shorter version of this essay was circulated among various comrades and was then discussed within a working group. This resulted in a number of very valuable observations that we tried to respond to as we reworked the entire text, in form as well as content. Some overly long notes, only indirectly linked to our subject, were separated from the text and incorporated into appendices. We believe that in doing this we have somewhat alleviated the excess of notes and bibliographic references. Given that this essay's aim is to give an answer to a still-unresolved problem that had serious consequences for the political and theoretical characteristics of a movement ostensibly identifying with Marx's doctrine, it is hoped that our decision to maintain the critical apparatus here used, even if the book's length is doubled by notes and appendices, will prove useful to our readers insofar as it might allow them to further reconstruct a theme that we have only begun to address here.

In terms of content, the observations that we received have allowed us to present a final version of this work, trusting that this offers a clearer demonstration of the relation between Marx's anti-authoritarian and anti-Bonapartist political prejudice – from which, concretely, he analysed the phenomenon of Bolívar – and the revitalisation of certain categories of the Hegelian framework that, having been relegated in his thought, seem to have again flourished in his examination of Latin America.

Since the volume that we today publish is, in some sense, the result of this fruitful exchange of ideas, we want to extend our deep thanks to all the comrades for their observations and the keen interest and perceptiveness with which they analysed this proposed critical reading of Marx, which, while inspired by his thought, nonetheless stresses the need to constantly put it to the test and redevelop it theoretically and politically. As such, our greatest aspiration is that the text should not be understood as a mere exercise in Marxist philology, but for what it is essentially meant to be: a contribution, however limited, to a fight for socialism, one that must open out into the multiplicity of forms that social struggles take on. All this explains the meaning of the dedication, which rather than delimiting a tendency, instead widens the dimensions of the analysis of reality that we propose, both critical-minded and without prejudice.

Mexico City, March 1980
 José Aricó

Preface to the Second Edition

In this second edition, apart from some stylistic corrections, updating the bibliography and altering some chapter titles, we have not changed the general shape of a work whose value we insist on identifying exclusively in its offer of a tentative introspection beginning to address a theoretical – but also practical – problem that has still not been sufficiently elucidated. Since its appearance it sparked a certain interest, expressed in a series of critical commentaries, some of which constituted real development of a theme that we only outlined. As such, the author can consider himself satisfied, insofar as what he considered a personal preoccupation, linked to a project of much wider dimensions, is today understood as a field of theoretical confrontation and debate. This was the motivation that impelled us to include an epilogue in which we try to address certain considerations more clearly, and which continues the dialogue that the sharp-minded critical senses of Carlos Franco allowed us to strike up with his comprehensive – if still rather generous – introduction.

Marx y América Latina was also discussed in the Centro de Estudios Contemporáneos del Instituto de Ciencias de la Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, to which the author belongs. The epilogue picks up on elements of this confrontation of ideas and perspectives, which was of very great use not only for this present text, but also for our future works.

Mexico City, July 1982
José Aricó

Chapter One

An Evaded Reality

To reflect on the process of formation and evolution of a movement that we can generally term socialist in Latin America necessarily implies a return to its sources, an effort to investigate the historical vicissitudes of perceptions of the 'Latin-American phenomenon' through the prism of a body of theoretical and political work that bore decisive influence on the development of the revolutionary social movements of the modern era. Here lies, however, one of our greatest difficulties, because while we can analyse with relative ease the Third International's conceptions of the economic, political and social reality of our continent, there remains an open question as to why it discovered this reality only belatedly.¹ And the further we go back in history, our difficulties increase as we are confronted with the need to trace the problem in Marx himself.

1. It was only starting with the Sixth Enlarged Executive Committee of the Communist International (17 February–15 March 1926) and only thanks to very special conditions that it began to consider in a more particular manner the socio-economic situation and need for a specific strategy in the Latin-American region. This change of perspectives erupted into the open in the debates of the Comintern's Sixth Congress (17 July–1 September 1928). Given both the number of parties represented and the particular attention granted to the problems of the Latin-American revolutionary and communist movement, this congress was considered the moment of the Comintern's 'discovery' of Latin America. In this same period, the South-American Secretariat of the Comintern drew up the first outlines of general theses on the particularities of the region. The near-totality of the Latin-American delegation's interventions dedicated to this theme, as well as those of some leading members, are collected in *Internacional Comunista* 1978, pp. 132–9, 175–86, 299–321, 351–85.

Today it is thus extremely complicated to imagine to what extent there existed in the Second International, or among some of its most important theorists, any critical perception of the problems of 'classification' that were posed – not to say, *are* posed – by Latin-American societies; in other words, to uncover a more or less defined concern to discern the foundations of the autonomy of our continent relative to the world as a whole. Nonetheless, a careful historical reconstruction demonstrates that the relations between this international body and the socialist parties and internationalist groups in Latin America existed from the very moment that it was created.

From the late nineteenth century, the Partido Socialista Argentino maintained very close links with the Second International and participated not only in its congresses, but also in the life of the International Socialist Bureau.² One of the movement's main theoretical organs, the German journal *Die Neue Zeit*, published commentaries on the social and political reality of the continent with relative frequency, drawn up not only by its own staff but also by local correspondents like Pablo Zierold in Mexico and Germán Ave Lallemand in Argentina. The same was true of *Critica sociale*, the Milanese journal directed by Filippo Turati.³ This being the case, we would go as far as to say that the quite generalised belief as to the late entry of the Latin-American socialist parties into the life of the Second International is by no means a certainty. Moreover, in the case of the socialist organisations of Brazil and Argentina, we can speak of their surprisingly early involvement.

Where, then, do we have to look for the reasons for this oversight, the causes of an undervaluing or underestimation that can hardly be put down to ignorance? Where can we find the motives for the exclusion in theory of a reality that, even if partially, really did enter into consideration in practice? As we shall try to demonstrate, posing the problem of the international socialist movement's

2. From its foundation, the Partido Socialista Argentino maintained a systematic and ongoing relationship with the Second International. It participated with its own delegations or had brother parties' delegations represent it at all or almost all of the international congresses and occupied a permanent post in the sessions of the International Socialist Bureau from 1901 until the eve of the First World-War.

3. Although we have been able to obtain a complete file of the texts by the correspondents and editors of *Die Neue Zeit* on Latin-American themes, unfortunately the same cannot be said for the other two European organs that most frequently referred to our continent's political and social life from the perspective of the socialist movement: *Critica sociale*, the Milanese publication close to the leadership-group of the Italian Socialist Party, and *Les Temps nouveaux*, published in Paris from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. The very fact of the interest with which these publications followed Latin-American events is a demonstration of what we are arguing, namely, the early links between the socialist movement in our countries and the European revolutionary and socialist movements. In our opinion, the ideological and organisational connections were much closer than is generally believed; and this is not only true for the particular case of Argentina.

awareness of the historical subject of 'Latin America' in fact means to recognise the limits of a theory to give account of a reality that is, to a certain extent, 'unclassifiable' in the terms in which Marxism has historically been posed *qua* the predominant ideology within the socialist movement. In consequence, the problem does not reside so much in the deficiencies of taxonomy as in the intention of establishing one without altering certain basic parameters of the theory itself. And given that the problem lies not only in theory, but also in the eccentricity of the reality of which we must give account, the difficulties begin, as we have already mentioned, with Marx himself.

There can be no doubt that the scarce attention Marx and Engels devoted to Latin America, for some writers better defined as outright indifference, must weigh 'heavily on the theoretical fate of the continent within the socialist tradition' and that 'his inept polemic against Bolivar and his rather hasty praise of the invasion of Mexico by the Yankees' could not be of much use to his disciples in the task of adequately finding their way on the terrain of Latin-American national sentiment.⁴ But can we consider ourselves satisfied with such an appraisal of the facts, without asking ourselves what significance they have, if not on Latin-American reality, then in terms of Marxian theory as a whole? Should we not continue to insist on determining the causes of Marx's scarce attention or indifference – if these are the right words to define his attitude – not as a mere exercise in Marxian philology, but rather as a means of again appraising the validity of Marx's body of theory in his examination of societies that do not conform to the bourgeois type? If today we have evidence that Marx and Engels's texts referring either directly or indirectly to Latin America are more abundant than has customarily been believed; that the attitude they adopted towards Latin-American reality cannot be identified *in toto* with the mindset with which they greeted the invasion of Mexico by the United States in their initial reaction;⁵

4. The quoted expressions are from Régis Debray 1975, p. 37. From a certain point of view, we might say that the concerns that guided the elaboration of the present work are the same as those expressed in section 2, 'El vocabulario marxista' of his first chapter, '¿Qué revolución?' (pp. 37–50). Nonetheless, it is unfortunate that the historical inaccuracies that he falls into greatly diminish the value of a text as promising as this and other chapters.

5. It ought to be remembered that the position Marx and Engels adopted in the 1840s and '50s, favourable to the conquest of Mexican territories by the United States, changed radically in the 1860s. It is true that in 1848 Engels affirmed that 'In *America* we have witnessed the conquest of Mexico and have rejoiced at it. It is also an advance when a country which has hitherto been exclusively wrapped up in its own affairs, perpetually rent with civil wars, and completely hindered in its development, a country whose best prospect had been to become industrially subject to Britain – when such a country is forcibly drawn into the historical process. It is to the interest of its own development that Mexico will in future be placed under the tutelage of the United States. The evolution of the whole of America will profit by the fact that the United States, by the possession of California, obtains command of the Pacific' (Engels 1975–2004a). In these same years, in

then when we speak of indifference, clearly we must be referring to some other matter. But in truth it is not so interesting to highlight the fact that this part of the world did not escape – logically enough – Marx’s penetrating focus entirely; what really matters is to investigate *from what perspective* he considered it. If we take such a standpoint, then neither is the polemic against Bolívar simply inept nor his indifference comprehensible.

In sum, what concerns us is to investigate what reasons could have led Marx not to pay attention, or maintain a certain degree of indifference, towards the specific, characteristic traits of Latin-American societies *at the same time* as he was taking on the complex task of determining the specificity of the Asiatic world, and, more generally, of those formations that did not conform to capitalist type. Clarifying the reasons for the difficulties demonstrated or hidden by Marx’s reflection, with the aim of incorporating our continent into his analysis of non-European societies, can, in our view, produce elements very useful to a global consideration of Marxism *in* Latin America, insofar as his initial ‘difficulty’ was converted – as we will try to demonstrate in this work – into a problematic terrain that remains controversial and insufficiently explored. The very fact that we can speak without too much risk of Marxism *in* Latin America even though it is extremely difficult for us to try to define what constitutes – if we assume it does exist – the Marxism *of* Latin America is nothing other than a grammatical expression of a very real historical challenge. Delving into the problematic terrain of Marx’s ‘perplexity’ does not mean a sterile exercise in philological erudition, but rather a likely fruitful attempt – on account of its theoretical and political implications – to achieve a better-articulated expression of the exact contours of the problem. On this basis, it will be possible to reconstruct afresh the whole history of Latin-American socialism.

a letter to Engels of 2 December 1854, Marx glossed his teacher Hegel to refer disdainfully to the character of Mexicans: ‘The Spanish are already degenerate. But a degenerate Spaniard, a Mexican, is an ideal. All the Spanish vices, braggadocio, swagger and Don Quixotry, raised to the third power, but little or nothing of the steadiness the Spanish possess’ (Marx 1975–2004b). However, in 1861, referring to the Confederate war of secession, Marx radically changed his position. The war for Texas, previously seen as the result of capitalist advance over Mexican backwardness, was now reinterpreted as yet another expression of the expansionist policy of the Southern slaveowning bloc (Marx 1975–2004c). Surprising, then, that in the Mexican democratic media – even within the Left itself – this change in Marx’s thought is all too often ignored, instead insisting on his earlier disdainful judgements, which never went so far as to question, however, the military attributes of General Santa Anna.

Chapter Two

The Growth of the Movement and the Crisis of Theory

For a long time, explanations of the problem were based on an uncritical acceptance of the supposed 'Eurocentrism' of Marx's thought, softened by recourse to Hegel's maxim that no-one can transcend the era in which he lives. If we know that, in the European consciousness of the nineteenth century, 'America' was a word designating the United States or, even more so, a *terra incognita* that only certain events now and then helped throw light on, why demand of Marx what was not possible in his time? Although both Marx and Engels were truly exceptional thinkers with an almost encyclopaedic range of interests, it would be quite wrong to demand of them that they escape their historical period. The pair were, perhaps, the most outstanding product of a civilisation that ended up with the world at its feet, relentlessly sweeping away ancient cultures, enslaving entire peoples, and converting the greater part of the planet into a mere extension of European capitalism. And while admitting that both Marx and Engels were its most radical critics, it is nevertheless the case that they developed their thought *within* that civilisation, with its codes and perspectives, with its theoretical horizons, with its forms of life and culture, with its tastes. The doctrine they elaborated represents the point of rupture with and dissolution of that civilisation, but – as is only logical and understandable – still clinging to them, like skin on the body, was the theoretical and cultural sediment and hang-ons that so often prevented them from being able to understand the distant and mysterious world

of the 'non-European' countries. Moreover, no-one can deny that Marx's reflections on pre-industrial, non-capitalist societies – dependent and colonial – did not attain a degree of systematisation and range sufficient to strike down the belief, today rather widespread, that his elaborations on the problem were merely circumstantial, contradictory and strongly Eurocentric.

This interpretative schema, whether consciously or not, tends to subsume an extremely complex and nuanced thinker under a category as ambiguous as 'Eurocentric', erases all difference, and denies any history of Marx's development that recognises periodisation, turning points, new discoveries and varying perspectives. As such, its analysis leaves out the role played by great political events in transforming a thought that was only set out in hypothesis-form in the *Communist Manifesto*. If we admit the presence of a 'Eurocentric' thought-framework, the great political events that Marx felt compelled to reflect on could only have served to curb its worst excesses, lacking the theoretical potential to change a framework that remained unaltered until the end of his life. Not even the exhumation of Marx's writings on the future development of the Russian communes could shift the foundations of this conception of society, which, finding shelter in the 'Eurocentric' reading of Marx's legacy, assumed the opposite meaning, paradoxically turning into an ideology justifying capitalist expansion across the world. If, indeed, Marx's growing distrust and opposition towards the horrors created around the world by bourgeois civilisation – something that obsessed him in his last years and explains his search for non-capitalist paths of social transformation – was recognised by some, then over time this matter was reduced to merely incidental importance. The theory held strong, unmovable in its characterisation of the progressive character of capitalism as the 'natural' pattern of social development. The triumph of the October Revolution and the traumatising process of building a socialist project in a 'backward' country had the rare virtue of confirming the beliefs of all sorts of rival tendencies. For the Communists, it was the irrefutable demonstration of the unity of the process of world history, explaining how their elaborations could claim to represent the 'adaptation' of Marxism to a new stage of human development. The possibility of a 'non-Western' form of social transformation, defended by Marx and the Narodniks in the 1880s, and questioned by Lenin *in theory* in the 1890s, was buried *in practice* in October 1917: the Bolshevik path became the only possible one, and, moreover, the only desirable one.

For the social democrats, conversely, the Bolshevik experience, with its marked features of Asiatic barbarism, confirmed their constantly-expressed theoretical and political rejection of the possibility of the democratic and socialist transformation of a 'backward' society. During these years, very few people noted with sufficient clarity the fact that the Russian Revolution really was a 'revolution against *Capital*' (to use Gramsci's unfortunate phrase), that is to say, a process of

social transformation that provoked a radical change in a historically-crystallised means of contemplating reality, a rupture in Marxist theory and practice that opened up new perspectives and brought about a new set of problems that had been precisely those that concerned Marx in the years beginning with the formation of the First International.

First the Chinese Revolution, and then the tumultuous emergence of the post-war colonial revolutions, smashed into a thousand pieces the apparent solidity and homogeneity of an interpretative schema incapable of giving account of the diversity and deep differentiation in a world that, in theory, capitalist was destined to unify. Indeed, the fact that the strategic assumptions that nourished the Second and Third Internationals were theoretically false and politically inadequate was demonstrated by the fragmentation of the socialist movement into ever more differentiated and antagonistic currents, irreconcilably clashing with one another, even if all of them somehow referred to Marx's thought. Today to speak of 'Marxism' is to make a symbolic reference to a non-existent purity, even a dogma; or rather, to mention a common historical reference-point in order to be able to delve into the contradictory world of the Marxisms that exist in reality, in other words, a polemical metaphor to express the need to confront Marx's thought with the historical movements that have been established in his name. Some would attempt to deduce from this the impossibility, now and for all time, of developing a theory of social transformation and classless society from the starting point of Marx's thought. Others discern in the 'crisis of Marxism' the surprising vitality of a theory that strives for a reality totally different from that in which it emerged. Perhaps now more than ever we can see how prophetic Rosa Luxemburg was in the words concluding her work devoted precisely to analysing the causes of the arrest of Marxist theoretical development in the early twentieth century:

If, then, today we detect a stagnation in our movement as far as these theoretical matters are concerned, this is not because the Marxist theory upon which we are nourished is incapable of development or has become out-of-date. On the contrary, it is because we have not yet learned how to make an adequate use of the most important mental weapons which we had taken out of the Marxist arsenal on account of our urgent need for them in the early stages of our struggle. It is not true that, as far as practical struggle is concerned, Marx is out-of-date, that we had superseded Marx. On the contrary, Marx, in his scientific creation, has outstripped us as a party of practical fighters. It is not true that Marx no longer suffices for our needs. On the contrary, our needs are not yet adequate for the utilisation of Marx's ideas.¹

1. Luxemburg 1927, p. 113. On this theme, see Appendix Two below.

This derives from a reasoning that is, certainly, insufficient and open to discussion; nevertheless, Rosa Luxemburg sets us on the right path in linking the issue of the 'stagnation' (or rather 'crisis', as we would put it today) of Marxism to the processes of the development of the socialist movement, which – as is only logical – tends to alter the whole previous frame of reference and expose the holes in a given body of thought. In changing the relationship between revolutionary theory and the unprecedented processes of transformation emerging from the crisis of capitalism, it is inevitable that Marxism – as a 'representation' of capitalist development, which constantly produces contradiction and crisis and is the source of the potential for a transformative socialist movement – is compelled to redefine itself and free itself from any dogmatism that may result from the nature of the socialist movement and the tendency for theory to crystallise. The 'crisis' of Marxism, the development of the movement, and capitalist crisis, all constitute an organic nexus that forbids us from locating the reasons for its advance or stagnation in theory alone. Rather, these reasons always have an extremely complicated relation to the vicissitudes of the movement itself. If the development of the socialist movement is tied to the processes of the complexification of economic and political relations, it cannot then be separated from the effects that these same processes have on theory. The crisis of Marxism, in consequence, rather than proof of its inevitable obsolescence, is, instead, an indication of its great vitality, the form adopted by the reversal of the relations between theory, movement and crisis: not only tidying up what existed previously, but also creating new, liberated possibilities in the very process of redefining theory in relation to its own history, social development and the *historical* character of capitalist development. What appears on the surface of these processes as the 'arrest' of Marxism, in practice represents a confirmation of the 'hermeneutic' value of historical materialism. As Rosa Luxemburg indicated in the text in question, the process of grasping hold of Marx's theoretical arsenal can only progress 'in proportion as our movement progresses, and demands the solution of new practical problems do we dip once more into the treasury of Marx's thought, in order to extract therefrom and to utilise new fragments of his doctrine'. It is through the development of the movement that new, once-remote fragments of Marx's doctrine come to be of use. 'But since our movement, like all the campaigns of practical life, inclines to go on working in old ruts of thought, and to cling to principles after they have ceased to be valid, the theoretical utilisation of the Marxist system proceed very slowly.'²

2. Ibid.

Chapter Three

The Reality and Fallacy of Marx's 'Eurocentrism'

But let us dwell further on the two claims that serve as the basis for the commonplace belief that Marx's 'Eurocentrism' is a logical and sufficient explanation of his indifference towards Latin America.

The first claim begins from the recognition that in Europe there is a generalised ignorance of the Latin-American reality. But can we take this claim as a given? Is it true that, in the European consciousness of the nineteenth century, our countries formed part of a practically unknown world, or were a mere extension of the United States? Do we not here have one of those assertions that, through force of repetition, do not receive the necessary scrutiny? Of course, this is not the right place to reconstruct the discontinuous, complex and contradictory process of the successive 'rediscoveries of America' by European consciousness, a process that – as is clear – accompanied the transformation of capitalism into a worldwide system. But we can say that, from the very moment of the incorporation of America into the economic, political and social system, essentially that of Spain and Portugal, there began an unstoppable traffic of goods, people and ideas that cannot be silenced by the strict censorship by which one might attempt to deny European consciousness of a newly emerging reality. From this moment, as Robert Paris aptly comments, America provided 'a language and represented a reservoir of dreams, symbols and images for the European subconscious'.¹ From the mid-eighteenth century, reflection

1. Paris and Rebérioux 1978, p. 166; Spanish translation in Paris and Rebérioux 1983.

on the character of the Indies, on the nature of its inhabitants and the reasons for its 'backwardness' were placed at the very heart of the establishment of a 'general science of man', a Eurocentric ideology of civilisation tied to the colonisation-process. But it is also within the framework of the 'contest over the New World' that there began to emerge a sense of difference, questioning the belief in the total unity of the human race. In Buffon, De Pauw and Abbé Raynal, the American world begins to exist, take on its own specific characteristics, a history living according to another rhythm and man acting according to different laws. It was precisely in searching the immensity of its horizons, the diversity of its inhabitants, the multiplicity of its languages, the difficulties of linking together its different societies, the weakness of American man and the hardships of nature, the antiquities of its settlements and its historical backwardness, that the essential facts for piecing together its singularity could be found.² Years later, Humboldt's work, in particular his *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*, provided Europe with a vast array of information that would be assimilated after the wars of independence by an army of diplomats, merchants, investors, and adventurers of all kinds (typically disguised as 'travellers'). With commercial traffic rapidly expanding, the ever-greater political influence of England on newly-liberated Spanish-speaking America, and the European countries' military intervention against the weaker nations of our continent, the region essentially became a reality that could not be ignored, at least for the European intelligentsia. If England was already, by the mid-nineteenth century, the country with the most developed capitalism, it is worth asking what this country really was: just the industrial centres of Manchester, Liverpool or London, or also its colonies in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean and its crushing political and economic hegemony over the formally independent nations of Latin America. All this constituted what has been metaphorically defined as the 'English mode of production'.³ The paradox lies in the fact that England was the very country where Marx decided to live after the defeat of the 1848 Revolution and his exile from Germany, and was precisely where he began to concern himself rather more substantially with the problems of the non-European world.

The coup d'état in France of 2 December 1851 marked the triumph of counter-revolution in Europe. According to Marx, the main bastions of the new European and world balance of forces, England and Russia, would find in the re-establishment of their traditional alliance the means of dominating all Europe and dividing the spoils of the Ottoman Empire amongst themselves. His analysis of the economic conditions of the era and his examination of the events that took place between 1848 and 1850 allowed him to reach the conclusion that there

2. See Appendix Two below.

3. The expression is from Jaffe 1976, pp. 85–104.

was beginning a new European and world-stage of capitalist development, under English hegemony: 'Just as the period of crisis occurs later on the Continent than in England, so does that of prosperity. The original process always takes place in England; it is the demiurge of the bourgeois cosmos'.⁴ For Marx, this would be the spark of a laborious personal effort to demystify bourgeois society in its highest point of development, in this demiurge of the bourgeois cosmos represented by England. It was, indeed, in 1850 that Marx renewed his economic studies that had been interrupted by the revolutions across Europe.

The enormous amount of material relating to the history of political economy assembled in the British Museum, the fact that London is a convenient vantage point for the observation of bourgeois society, and finally the new stage of development which this society seemed to have entered with the discovery of gold in California and Australia, induced me to start again from the beginning and to work carefully through the new material.⁵

What is of interest is that, as Marx himself notes, this new phase of capitalist development expanded his analytical perspective such that he was compelled to address 'apparently quite remote subjects on which I had to spend a certain amount of time'. The apparent change of focus in his studies was not, as is often believed, determined by the need to fulfil his role as a correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, forced by his difficult financial situation; rather, the fundamental reason has to be located in this extension of the concept of the 'bourgeois cosmos', which demanded an examination of colonialism as part of the capitalist system and the need for the working classes to 'master themselves the mysteries of international politics'. As such, London was not only his preferred observatory for studying the commercial world: like The Hague in the eighteenth century, London

in his time represented the place where the stock-market bulletins – just as a barometer registers the slightest oscillation in atmospheric pressure – noted every change, however slight, in the balance of international political forces, and more quickly than anywhere else. In this era, only in England would it have been possible for there to appear a whole series of specialised commissions... devoted exclusively to the study of foreign policy, that minutely followed the activities of the Foreign Office and subjected each of its steps to the liveliest of criticism.⁶

4. Marx 1975–2004d, p. 134.

5. Marx 1975–2004e, pp. 264–5.

6. Riazanov 1980, p. 15ff.

As such, analysis of capitalist society, the economic conditions of the world market and international diplomatic relations represented three lines of investigation whose mutual connections had to be clarified in the laborious effort of identifying the economic law that governed the movement of modern society. Thus this rare change of focus in his studies, rather than an *external* factor that weighed unfavourably on his 'economic' investigation, was in fact a condition *internal* to this investigation itself. If we take this perspective, then Marx's *critique of political economy* must be read in parallel to all his numerous works studying the 'bourgeois cosmos', so significantly expanded on account of the economic crisis of 1847 and the revolutionary crisis of 1848–9.

But returning to our own framework, if the points we have made mean that it is possible to dispute the notion that, for the Europe of the mid-nineteenth century, there was no reasonably broad knowledge of our continent; and if we can say that in the case of England, it was, in fact, rather precise; then why did Marx, having set himself up at the centre of the colonial system, and having at hand all the documentation he needed (and which he did make use of, in part), at the very moment that he was constructing his theoretical framework, not, as is today widely believed, pay substantial attention to an element of decisive importance to the process of capitalism's transformation into a world-system? Or, to put it another way, how come his inquiry into the non-European world emerged as an analysis of the causes of the backwardness and economic, social and political stagnation of the 'Asiatic' societies, with no explicit attempt to incorporate the Latin-American reality? If we have to rule out the argument pointing to his supposed lack of awareness – which, as we have said, was not inconsiderable, and which he stayed close to the British Museum in order to help widen, since there he could access all the information he needed for this – then the decision to analyse one type of society rather than the other implicitly suggests Marx's lack of clarity as to the features that in some measure *related*, but most of the time *distinguished* Latin-American and Asiatic societies in the colonial capitalist system. If such a definition would necessarily imply the prior establishment of a classification-system, and if this refers back to the ideology on which one bases oneself, the 'paradox' in Marx demands some explanation other than the easy recourse to his supposed ignorance, throwing us back to the constantly-reiterated image, converted into an ideology, of an America pushed to the margins of history and inevitably doomed to be seen in a diminished and self-referential light by Europe.

However, such a claim merely feeds the belief in a strong 'historical' conditioning of Marx's thought, a belief that clearly does not help us at all in the complicated task of clearing the field of the simplistic arguments that only confuse matters. Such arguments represent either undeniable statements of fact, valid

for all countries and thus proper to no country *in particular*, or else cover for the uncritical assumption that Marx's 'Eurocentrism' imposed an insuperable limitation. It is precisely this latter argument that is pointed to by the claim, sometimes implicit, very often explicit, that Marx's reflection on non-capitalist, dependent or colonial countries was always circumstantial, contradictory and ultimately marginal to his real concerns, which were fundamentally located in his analysis of the laws of functioning of 'modern' societies, that is to say, fully capitalist ones, the study of the characteristics of class-struggles *in those* societies and the concern for the process of organising *their* proletariat. A more developed understanding of the totality of Marx's *oeuvre* demonstrates that this statement, as we earlier argued, stands in contradiction with what Marx really thought and wrote; to accept any kind of separation of the unity he establishes between the origins of 'developed' and 'colonial' capitalism inevitably leads to silencing, undervaluing or ignoring substantial parts of Marx's theoretical framework and his methodological perspective.

However, it must be remembered that the overtly Marxist socialist movement laid down its theory and practice long before the totality of his *oeuvre* was known of, and this based on the reading and popularisation of only certain of his and Engels's writings. What the European Social Democracy of the late nineteenth century termed 'Marxism' was a certain understanding of texts such as the *Communist Manifesto*, the 'Preface' to his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, and the *Anti-Dühring* – far less the first volume of *Capital* – all of them read from a strongly positivist perspective, the theoretical support of an ideology that sought to systematise Marx's thinking along clear 'scientific' lines.⁷

7. On this note see Haupt 1980. In this work, which the author's unfortunate death prevented him from finishing, Georges Haupt analysed how the theoretical corpus of Marxism was established as the ideology of the working class in the late nineteenth century. He argued that 'With regard to the choice of the term "Marxism", its definition is closely linked to the definition that Kautsky gave Marx's theory and the systematisation of it that he developed. In overall terms, the word is synonymous with "Marx's system"; more particularly, it serves two functions. The first consists of designating a guiding principle: "Marxism, the conception of our party *qua* the organisation of the proletariat committed to the class-struggle"; the second serves to define Marx's theory as a science in general and as a scientific socialism in particular. Kautsky specified this on repeated occasions. Thus, on the tenth anniversary of *Die Neue Zeit*, he wrote: "The term scientific should cover, without doubt, all aspects of Marxism, but at the same time it should say something further, or should be considered more ambitious than Marxism alone, which does not claim to say the last word on all matters of science". And in his polemic with Bernstein he added another dimension: "It is the method that results from the application of the materialist conception of history to politics; thanks to this, socialism has become a science..." Is it method that is the essential in Marxist socialism, and not the results? This insistence on the definition of Marxism as a science can give us the key to understanding the reasons why Kautsky adopted the term and the interpretation of "Marx's system" that he offered. It is important to remember the manner in which, in the 1880s, Kautsky, a fervent admirer – like all his generation – of

When, years later, the vast mass of works that both Marx and Engels devoted to the phenomena of capitalism on a world scale, questions of international politics, and the struggles for the 'national' fulfilment of dependent peoples, was unearthed, they were incorporated into a cultural milieu that was ill-prepared to understand their true significance.⁸ Indeed, they were read as confirmation of the famous thesis advanced in *Capital* that the most developed country shows the least developed the image of its own future, a thesis interpreted by the Social Democrats (and not only them) as the presence of an inexorable, inherent tendency in economic development towards the equalisation of all countries in terms of levels of productivity, the development of the productive forces and the shape of their socio-economic structures. Such was the typical interpretation of Marx's study into the process of the English colonisation of India. In the case of other works, such as those addressing Spain, Ireland and Russia, they were practically left aside on account of the belief that these were 'circumstantial writings' put together by Marx and Engels in order to earn a crust, that is to say, to meet purely financial needs and without adequate prior study. Distorted, dismissed or directly silenced by the 'Marxist' intelligentsia, these texts were thus unable to help unsettle the image of Marx's 'Eurocentrism', which official Marxism had effectively established as an indisputable fact. As such, the context in which these writings were put together, the era in which they were written and the problems they sought to address during the decisive stages of the elaboration of Marx's fundamental theoretical work – *Capital* – was forgotten; but furthermore, so too were political experiences of great importance, for instance that of the First International. As Levrero stresses:

Darwin, seemed inspired by the success, the resonance, the force of attraction of the term "Darwinism": the desire to express symbolically an essential dimension of Marx's *oeuvre* guided his forward movement, and if Darwinism was synonymous with the science of nature, then Marxism was synonymous with the social sciences. Here, we must stress that Kautsky was certainly not an innovator in this respect; the parallel between Darwin and Marx was a constant in socialist discourse at the end of the nineteenth century and corresponded to the collective sensibilities and mentality of the time, saturated as they were with scientism, dominated by monist materialism and by the ideas of progress and evolution derived from the natural sciences. For Kautsky, the essential characteristic of Marxism as a science is the materialist conception of history' (Haupt 1980, pp. 225–7).

8. The works of Marx and Engels on this subject were compiled in a partial form and only with reference to the Crimean War by Marx's daughter Eleanor at the end of the nineteenth century: Marx 1897. David B. Riazanov later took on the task of preparing an exhaustive compilation of the articles of Marx and Engels published in *The New York Daily Times* and various European newspapers between 1852 and 1862. He only managed to produce a first part in two volumes – Marx 1917 – a French translation of which was published in Paris: see Marx 1929–30. A good part of the articles of Marx and Engels devoted more specifically to the problems of the colonial world have appeared in various Spanish-language compilations. See, in particular, Marx and Engels 1978, which includes their most-cited works on this theme.

the importance of *certain* writings that were neither marginal nor, conversely, essential to the development and understanding of Marx and Engels's work – their writings on Ireland – came to be forgotten. [These] represented a *decisive* turning point, explicit and without too much ambiguity, in the Marxist conception of the proletarian revolution; these writings were Marx and Engels's most important political experience *within* the International. Not only that; they also addressed problems of revolutionary strategy and tactics that still today remain at the centre of debates in the international communist movement; lastly, they represent a splendid example of Marx's scientific approach to his work and theoretical questions more generally: following the evolution of Marx's thought with regard to the Irish question, we can trace, to a very precise degree, the birth of a moment that would be of fundamental importance to the development of the later revolutionary politics of the proletariat.⁹

9. Levrero 1979, p. 15.

Chapter Four

De Te Fabula Narratur?

It was no chance-thing that Marx began to concern himself more substantially with the phenomenon of world capitalist expansion in the decade that he resumed his economic studies and elaborated the first draft of his book *Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, better-known as the *Grundrisse*.¹ It was, moreover, the decade that followed the defeat of the revolutions in Europe and that saw a profound change in Marx and Engels's conception of the characteristics, level and rhythm of world capitalist development. The hypothesis advanced in the *Communist Manifesto* as to the full maturity of market expansion was revealed to be false, or at least too hasty, in the light of the extraordinary economic transformation and gigantic growth that took place in Europe and worldwide after 1848. The hopes placed in a new flowering of revolution, this time burying bourgeois society for good, were abandoned in favour of an obsessive search among the material conditions of capitalist development for the causes that had led to this new phase characterised by the 'triumph of the bourgeoisie'.² The articles published from 1851 to 1862 in the *New York Herald Tribune* demonstrated Marx and Engels's concern to uncover in their concrete analysis of capitalist development and in the formation of the world market the elements necessary for developing the theory of

1. See Marx 1973.

2. This was the title given by the Italian editors of Eric J. Hobsbawm's work *The Age of Capital* (Hobsbawm 1975), to which we must refer the reader for an excellent overview of the whole period.

Capital and verifying the existence within bourgeois society of the material basis for socialist revolution. It was from precisely this analysis, and from the study of the particular cases of India and China, that Marx deduced that the development of colonialism represented resounding proof of the bourgeoisie's potential for economic and political development. As such in 1858 he allowed himself reason to doubt the triumph of a socialist revolution in Europe while the development of bourgeois society continued its ascent on the incomparably larger terrain of the dependent and colonial countries.³ The widening of the world market, a powerful catalyst for the centralisation of capital and simultaneously for economic development, led to a generalised extension of capitalist relations across the oppressed countries. The result was a growing economic and political interdependence between Europe and the rest of the world, which would then lay the basis for the development of imperialism. But the process of socialisation necessarily tied to the capitalist mode of production could not remain limited to the economic market, but also, and especially, weighed on the development of political struggle. After England's policy provoked a revolution in China, Marx asked what reaction the Chinese transformations would in turn provoke in England, and thus throughout all of Europe.⁴ From his analysis of the consequences of English rule in India, and of its economic penetration in China, Marx deduced the possibility, created by colonisation, of a revolution in the colonial world that, unlike the one that he had hypothesised before 1848, would not now depend on the revolutionary political action of the popular classes of

3. See Marx's letter to Engels of 8 October 1858, where he writes 'There is no denying that bourgeois society has for the second time experienced its 16th century, a 16th century which, I hope, will sound its death knell just as the first ushered it into the world. The proper task of bourgeois society is the creation of the world market, at least in outline, and of the production based on that market. Since the world is round, the colonisation of California and Australia and the opening up of China and Japan would seem to have completed this process. For us, the difficult question is this: on the Continent revolution is imminent and will, moreover, instantly assume a socialist character. Will it not necessarily be crushed in this little corner of the earth, since the movement of bourgeois society is still, in the ascendant over a far greater area?' (Marx 1975–2004f).

4. See Marx's article 'Revolution in China and Europe' from the 14 June 1853 *New York Herald Tribune*: Marx 1975–2004g. Recalling Hegel and his exaltation of 'the law of the contact of extremes' as one of the secret laws governing nature, Marx curiously projected this law onto the revolutionary events in China: 'Whether the "contact of extremes" be such a universal principle or not, a striking illustration of it may be seen in the effect the Chinese revolution seems likely to exercise upon the civilized world. It may seem a very strange, and a very paradoxical assertion that the next uprising of the people of Europe, and their next movement for republican freedom and economy of Government, may depend more probably on what is now passing in the Celestial Empire – the very opposite of Europe – than on any other political cause that now exists – more even than on the menaces of Russia and the consequent likelihood of a general European war. But yet it is no paradox, as all may understand by attentively considering the circumstances of the case.'

the metropolis, but rather would itself decisively condition both capitalist development in the central countries and the outbreak of proletarian revolution in Europe. The dominion of capital over the world created an inter-relationship, as a result of which one part of the world would necessarily come to depend on the other, at the same time as conditioning it; the establishment of a 'colonial' capitalism in fact meant a transformation *within* the 'industrial' capitalist mode of production itself. The uneven development of the world-economy would, in turn, create an uneven specialisation of the economy in a given country or region as compared to others; but this specialisation is but one of the two poles of a dialectical contradiction, changing together with the changing needs of the central country. Underdevelopment played out as a function of the development of the metropolis, and thus the subordinate position of the colonised country would remain a constant. While in the metropolis, the process of proletarianisation resulted in the transformation of the peasant into an industrial worker, in Ireland, conversely, thanks to uneven specialisation – not based on 'natural, immutable conditions', but rather imposed by English rule – there was no industrial development, and the proletarianised peasantry pushed down wages in the towns and countryside alike. The result was the growing organisation of workers in England in defence of their economic interests, while in Ireland, unemployment and the consequent decline in living standards led to the social disaggregation of the popular strata, emigration and generalised poverty. But if Irish underdevelopment was the product of the policies and the exigencies of accumulation in England and the metropolitan countries, in a flagrant demonstration of how the accumulation of wealth for one people simultaneously means the accumulation of poverty, tortuous labour, ignorance, brutalisation and moral degradation for another people,⁵ then it is clear why, for Marx, the study of the Irish question represented an element of fundamental importance for his analysis of the process of capital accumulation, and, therefore, for the construction of his entire theoretical system. The fact that this context has generally escaped the attention of European 'Marxists' 'obviously does not mean that this analysis cannot occupy a central position in the construction of the Marxian model of capitalism, but rather testifies to the incomprehension of Marx's thought among the theorists of European socialism.'⁶ Driven by the political needs of the First International, and in the middle of the construction of his theoretical system, Marx examined the Irish question and established a series of elements fundamental to the elaboration of a 'phenomenology of underdevelopment': to demonstrate the accumulation of capital in the dependent country is a function of that in the metropolitan country; to explain the transformation of the former

5. *Capital* Volume I, Chapter Twenty-Five, Section 5F.

6. Levrero 1979, p. 39.

into an agricultural appendage of the latter; the expropriation of the oppressed country's surplus as to accelerate the industrialisation of the dominant country and the role that free trade played in destroying local industries; the significance of the cheap labour-force brought in by forced migrations for the expansion of the great capitalist factory-system; and so on. But at the same time, he drew the political consequences of this analysis.

There can be no doubt that it was the case of Ireland – as with Poland before it – that allowed him to clearly explain the principle upheld by the revolutionaries of 1848, according to which a people that oppresses another cannot itself be free. But just as in an earlier stage of their reflections Marx and Engels had thought that the independence of Ireland would have to be the result of revolution in England, from 1867 they drew sharp conclusions from their recognition that the English labour movement was a tributary of Great Britain's colonial exploitation of the Irish people. From this point, Marx and Engels saw the *national* emancipation of Ireland as the first condition of the *social* emancipation of the English proletariat. We thus face a real 'turning point' in Marx's thought, opening up a whole new analytical perspective with the study of the contradictory question of the relations between class- and national struggles, this true *punctum dolens* of the whole history of the socialist movement. This places an accent on the effect that the struggle of the popular classes in the dependent country can have in sparking the struggle of the working class in the dominant country. The Eurocentric Marx who privileged the objectively progressive effects of capitalism, he who emerged from readings of the *Manifesto* to be turned into the *only* Marx of Social Democracy's theory and practice, has to give way to a new figure, deeply nuanced and with an open mind towards the new phenomena in the world driven by the universalisation of capitalism.

In reality, Marx's study of the Irish question allowed him to lay down an economic and political proposal for the liberation of Ireland that, notwithstanding the passing of time, remains the basic initial programme of any emancipatory process in dependent and colonial countries: 1) self-government and independence from England; 2) agrarian revolution; 3) protective tariffs against England.⁷ This is significant today if we consider that while the First International accepted this as its programme for a concrete 'colonial situation', it was not picked up again – or even mentioned – by either the Second International or the socialist

7. Such is the programme for Ireland outlined by Marx in his letter to Friedrich Engels of 30 November 1867: 'What the Irish need is: 1. Self-government and independence from England. 2. Agrarian revolution. With the best will in the world the English cannot do this for them, but they can give them the legal means to do it for themselves. 3. *Protective tariffs against England*. From 1783–1801 every branch of industry in Ireland flourished. By suppressing the protective tariffs which the Irish parliament had established, the Union destroyed all industrial life in Ireland' (Marx 1975–2004h).

movements in the dependent colonial countries.⁸ To take the Latin-American example, the Argentinian socialists, who passed for the most knowledgeable interpreters of Marx's thought, were, nonetheless, the bitterest opponents of any kind of state-control of foreign trade that would in any way affect the corporate interests of the urban proletariat and the agricultural producers, completely avoiding the issue of the necessary bond of unity that Marx and Engels wanted to tie between the 'national' and 'social' factors.⁹ As a result, in the international socialist movement, the class-struggle and the national struggle – which, from the 'Irish example' onwards, appear in Marx's thought as interdependent movements, albeit distinguishable from the point of view of the social classes involved – were posed as separate and largely contradictory forces.

From the late 1860s onwards, Marx would not abandon this thesis that the uneven development of capitalist accumulation displaced the locus of revolution from the countries of Western Europe to the dependent and colonial countries. For this reason he studied with ever-greater passion the processes of proletarianisation taking place in India, Turkey, Eastern Europe and Russia. If, indeed, it

8. One would search in vain to find in the acts of the international socialist congresses of Amsterdam (1904) or Stuttgart (1907) any mention of Marx and Engels having held these positions. Although it is not linked to the Irish example, strictly speaking, there is some discussion of the corrupting effect that the profits of colonial domination have on the working class in the central capitalist countries in Lenin's article devoted to making a critical assessment of the deliberations at the Stuttgart congress, which he attended. See Lenin 1972. On this issue, of decisive importance to a proper understanding of the Leninist theory of imperialism, it is useful to consult Eric Hobsbawm's brief essay 'Lenin and the "aristocracy of labour"': Hobsbawm 1970.

9. With regard to the economic relations between the peripheral countries and the central capitalist countries, Dr. Juan B. Justo, the leading exponent of the Partido Socialista Argentino, consistently upheld a policy of economic liberalism, since, in his opinion, 'the workers' party, international in tendency and organisation, cannot be tricked by the fictions of industrial nationalism or protectionism, with customs barriers as barbarous as they were a hundred and fifty years ago' (Justo 1931). In considering this position of Justo's, so reviled by Argentina's 'nationalist' currents, it remains necessary to remember: 1) that this was a position shared by almost the entire international socialist movement; 2) that at the time in which this position was advanced and defended (the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, thus before the crisis of the 1930s) it was not posed as some alternative of an 'imperialist' bent as opposed to a 'national' bourgeois-industrial project, which in fact did not exist at the time; 3) that such a position was adopted in defence of working-class living-conditions, which according to Justo were affected by the increase in the cost of the essential means of reproducing labour power provoked by protectionist policies. If we recall, moreover, that Justo's project was designed in terms of the industrial development of Argentinian agriculture and ranching, the Socialist leader's position should not be considered as decidedly pro-imperialist, but rather as defending a 'different' type of capitalism. The fact that, without a reasonably adequate theory of imperialism, he was unable to critically consider the practicability of this project should not lead us so far as to misrepresent the meaning of his proposal. On this theme, it is worth rereading the articles that he published in 1896, devoted to defending free trade from the working classes' point of view. Republished in Justo 1947, pp. 132–41.

was his political interests that encouraged this shift in his attention, in the sense that it was precisely in these places that these years saw an extraordinary growth in the revolutionary movement, what is particularly interesting is the manner in which he tried to scientifically establish the causes of the crisis and the social upheavals. And it was with reference to the Russian question that he elaborated his most interesting points on the particular conditions in which accumulation must take place in a country that is extremely backward, even if not 'dependent' like Ireland or India, and whose agrarian structure is characterised by the survival of precapitalist social institutions entailing the common ownership of land. Faced with the question of what might be the effects of the concentration of capital and the new international division of labour, driven by the world domination of finance capital, on a country with characteristics such as Russia's, Marx tried to respond via two texts of momentous theoretical significance, but which were sadly ignored by the intended audience.

The first of them was a letter to the editors of the Russian journal *Otechestvennye Zapiski* written in late 1877, polemicising against one of its editors' erroneous interpretation of *Capital*.¹⁰ Marx criticised the Russian liberals for having reshaped his 'sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into an historico-philosophic theory of the *marche generale* [general path] imposed by fate upon every people, whatever the historic circumstances in which it finds itself'.¹¹ For Marx, the key to social phenomena had to be found '[b]y studying each of these forms of evolution separately and then comparing them...but one will never arrive there by the universal passport of a general historico-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being super-historical'.¹² In consequence, it would be mistaken to start from Marx's method only to reach the conclusion that the laws of accumulation that compelled a determinate outcome in Western-European capitalism must necessarily lead to the same results in a country like Russia. In virtue of the existence of the *obshchina*, the primitive rural commune, Russia had the historical possibility of not having to take a path through capitalism to the achievement of its 'social regeneration'. According to Marx 'thanks to a unique combination of circumstances, the rural commune, still established on a nationwide scale, may gradually detach itself from its primitive features and develop directly as an element of collective production on a nationwide scale'.¹³ To the extent that the rural commune was 'the contemporary of Western capitalist production',¹⁴ at a moment when this system was undergoing

10. See Appendix Three.

11. Marx 1975–2004a.

12. Ibid.

13. Marx 1975–2004i.

14. Ibid.

a state of crisis, it could 'appropriate its fruits without subjecting itself to its *modus operandi*'.^{15,16} But the possibility of an 'exception' derived from Marx's implicit recognition of the permanent unevenness of capitalist development and, moreover, the theoretical representation of this development not as the inevitable material convergence of the whole range of existing socio-economic realities, but rather as the capitalist mode of production imposing itself over all previous modes, and the corresponding change in its meaning and social function. And it is precisely this that Marx affirmed in Volume II of *Capital* when he highlighted that even as the origin of raw materials was obliterated as they were incorporated into productive capital as forms of industrial capital,

However it still remains true that to replace them they must be reproduced, and to this extent the capitalist mode of production is conditional on modes of production lying outside of its own stage of development. But it is the tendency of the capitalist mode of production to transform all production as much as possible into commodity production. The mainspring by which this is accomplished is precisely the involvement of all production into the capitalist circulation process. And developed commodity production itself is capitalist commodity production. The intervention of industrial capital promotes this transformation everywhere, but with it also the transformation of all direct producers into wage-labourers.¹⁷

If we add that this text was composed by Marx towards the end of the 1870s, how can we not link it to the studies that he was carrying out in these same years, with all their tenacity and passion, regarding the communitarian forms of society that preceded and accompanied the development of class-societies? Indeed, in these years Marx applied himself to the Russian economy and its social movements with such commitment that, according to Engels's ironical observation, we can say that this was the reason that *Capital* remained unfinished.¹⁸

15. Ibid.

16. [The Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente translation of the letter to Zasulich that Aricó is quoting here (Marx and Engels 1980b, pp. 29–61) reads somewhat differently, explaining that the commune could appropriate all capitalism's 'positive conquests without passing through its terrible vicissitudes' – DB.]

17. Marx 1956, pp. 113–14. It should be remembered that a good part of the manuscripts of Volume II were written by Marx in the late 1870s. More concretely, the fifth manuscript from which this quote is taken is from March 1877 and was then reworked by Marx in the sixth manuscript, written between October 1877 and July 1878.

18. According to Lafargue's recollections, Engels once observed – apparently ironically, but at heart out of serious concern – that if it were up to him, he would gladly have burned all the books of statistics that Marx's Russian friends were overwhelming him with and that prevented him from finishing *Capital*. In reality, the protest does not make sense, in that Marx clearly attributed fundamental importance to the study of Russian economic development for the definitive elaboration of his work. This is, moreover, what Engels himself recognised in his 'Preface' to Volume III of *Capital* when he stated that

It is worth recalling Engels's aphorism in that this tacit underestimation of the decisive importance of such studies to making explicit the implicit potentialities of Marx's conception of the development of social forms to some extent facilitated the positivist deformation that imposed itself within the socialist movement. It is no chance-thing that it was precisely by means of readdressing Marx's interpretative hypothesis that Lenin was able to formulate the key concept of 'socio-economic formations', thus opening a new chapter in the history of 'Marxism'.¹⁹

The second of the texts concerned is the draft of a work on the 'future of the Russian commune' that Marx intended as a reasoned response to the concerns of the Russian populists, as expressed in a letter he had received from Vera Zasulich. In warning that, for various reasons, it was not possible for him to conclude such a complicated analysis as was proposed within a peremptory timeframe, he

'In the seventies Marx engaged in entirely new special studies for this part on ground-rent. For years he had been studying, in the original language, the statistical reports that the Russian "reform" of 1861 had made unavoidable, as well as other publications on landed property which Russian friends put at his disposal as fully as anyone could desire. He made extracts from these and intended to make use of them in a new version of this section. Given the manifold diversity of forms of landed property and exploitation of the agricultural producers of Russia, this country was to play the same role in the Part on ground-rent as England had done for industrial wage-labour in Volume 1. Unfortunately Marx was never able to carry out this plan' (Engels in Marx 1981, pp. 96–7). On this note, it is here worth returning to the commentary of Schlesinger, of which many Marxists do not always take sufficient account: 'Anyone who understands the history of Russian society knows that through its distinguishing features we can see the absence of the classic English model; and thus it is up to our imagination to reconstruct a fourth volume of *Capital*, in which the variety of forms of agricultural organisation will offer similar examples of capitalist penetration into agriculture organised under precapitalist forms. Fitting neatly into this framework would be the feudal *latifundia* in the process of transformation into large-scale capitalist enterprises, the village communities in which the poor neighbour of the *kulak* is gradually transformed into a wage-labourer in the services of the *kulaks*, the free peasant-colonists on newly-colonised land and the capitalist Cossack tenant-farmers. Certainly, there would be no need to dwell on concepts such as "absolute rent" that occupy so much space in the second part of Volume III of *Capital*, in the form in which they have reached us' (Schlesinger 1961, pp. 319–20). Marx himself was sure to highlight that the interposition of a group of – typically capitalist – tenant-farmers between the landowners and the peasants who worked the land was only possible 'only in those countries which dominate the worldmarket in the transition period from the feudal to the capitalist mode of production' (Marx 1981, p. 935), meaning, that it was a characteristically British phenomenon.

19. As Paggi notes, the above-cited Marx passage not only represents 'the central idea of all Lenin's studies on the development of capitalism in Russia, but also comprises a theoretical representation of capitalist development in general, which does not in any way imply the material uniformity of the whole variety of existing society, but rather the capitalist mode of production imposing itself over all previous ones and the corresponding change in its meaning and social function. To understand what class commands the process of development means to find that which is *dominant* in a given socio-economic formation' (Paggi 1980, p. 73).

wrote a brief letter to his correspondent, dated 8 March 1881, in which he insisted on his 1877 positions. In this letter, Marx concluded by affirming that

the analysis provided in *Capital* does not adduce reasons either for or against the viability of the rural commune, but the special study I have made of it, and the material for which I drew from original sources, has convinced me that this commune is the fulcrum of social regeneration in Russia, but in order that it may function as such, it would first be necessary to eliminate the deleterious influences which are assailing it from all sides, and then ensure for it the normal conditions of spontaneous development.²⁰

As we already know, with Zasulich having become a Marxist in the time between her letter and Marx's, the text was jealously guarded until it was exhumed more than thirty years later upon the opening-up of the archives of her comrade Axelrod. As for the drafts of the letter, they were deciphered by Riazanov in Vienna in 1913, though they were not published until 1926. It is interesting to note that even after its publication (in a scientific journal of little circulation and resonance) for years the text did not rouse any particular attention in the communist movement, except from Bukharin, who had worked together with Riazanov on his deciphering efforts in Vienna. This was relevant in that it was Bukharin himself who theoretically and politically upheld the idea of a path of socialist construction for Soviet Russia that privileged the rural sector, and as such demonstrated particular understanding of the peasant-question. It was also Bukharin who elaborated the strategic conception of the worldwide 'country-side' of the dependent and colonial countries besieging the 'citadels' of capitalism, a concept that, as we have tried to identify, was increasingly ripening in Marx during his final years.

From this, the role played by Marx's strategic turn on the basis of his analysis of the 'Irish example' becomes clear. It had a role of indubitable theoretical and political importance: it meant going beyond seeing the 'industrial proletariat' as the only factor favouring social transformations in a socialist sense. The vision of an uneven, non-uniform development of capitalism analysed at the economic level, though in great part motivated by a growing lack of confidence in the revolutionary potential of the English – and, by extension, European – proletariat, led Marx to pay ever-greater attention to the peripheral countries, where there were sharp class confrontations during the crisis that matured in the 1870s.²¹ This goes some way to explaining his increasing devotion to his readings on the world

20. Marx 1975–2004k.

21. It was without doubt this change of perspective, far from unrelated to the collapse of the hopes inspired by the Paris Commune, that impelled Marx in particular – and Engels, too, to a lesser extent, and with a different slant – to give ever more privileged focus to the study of agrarian and primitive communities. See in particular Appendix Four.

of the peasantry and the rural commune and the possibility of the society developing along paths to socialism that avoided the 'Western' capitalist road. All this implied an advance in his theoretical system in the sense that it assimilated the effects that the constitution of the world market had on capitalism itself: the world market being, as we know, a category that Marx left aside in his methodology, even though he continued to propose (at least until 1857; we cannot determine if also beyond this point) that it was possible to deal with it specifically. It is by considering all these problems and the difficulties that they raise for theory that we can, perhaps, make a more productive attempt to give a more carefully thought-through explanation of Marx's failure to complete a work to which he devoted his whole life.

Effectively left an open work by its own author, replete with multiple meanings, *Capital* nonetheless served, as read by the socialist movement, as the theoretical foundation of a teleological vision of societal development, in which each society emerges from the previous one following a unilinear schema that leads to the inevitable triumph of socialism. Thus a work conceived by Marx as the greatest of theoretical blows against the bourgeoisie, one which it could never recover from, instead became the book of the bourgeoisie in the backward countries: that is, the surest basis for accepting the necessity and progressive character of capitalism as it had been configured in Western Europe. The contradictory dialectic of real life thus entered into theory in the castrated form of a philosophy of history that facilitated the transformation of the disruptive potential of the revolutionary movements into factors favouring the self-regulation of the capitalist system itself. It is for this reason that Marx's supposed 'Eurocentrism' absolutely had to be turned into an acceptable and accepted reality. This, in turn, makes it possible to understand the paradoxical fact that a whole section of Marx's legacy has been undervalued as mere circumstantial writings of no theoretical value. It is thus interesting to analyse, on this score, the interpretations made of Marx's statement in the preface to the first edition of *Capital* to the effect that England was the mirror reflecting the future of all peoples, accompanied by the Latin phrase with which he emphasised it: '*De te fabula narratur!*', and then to compare these interpretations to the rejection of any recourse to historical analogies expressed in his draft letter to Vera Zasulich. A critical perspective such as that we advance here necessarily presupposes a global re-reading of the whole of Marx's *oeuvre* that, in avoiding the easy recourse to justifications invoking his 'period' or his supposed 'Eurocentric limitation, allows us to identify within the texts themselves the moments of continuity and rupture, the reciprocal relation between theory and history, between morphological analysis and the level of the class movement. We can imagine that the Marx who emerges from such an analytical operation might be rather far from the stereotypical 'scientific' image that official Marxism has taught us to expect.

Chapter Five

The Theoretical and Political Presuppositions of National 'Autonomy'

Once we have challenged the idea that 'Eurocentric' limitations were at the root of Marx's inability to see the reality of Latin America, we must again pose the question, this time in a clearer manner and freed from any extraneous complicating factors. If we accept that Marx's analytical perspective, in his consideration of the phenomena of the non-capitalist world, was an extremely rich one, and if we admit that his knowledge of our region was greater than is generally recognised, then the question remains: why did Marx not apply to his examination of Latin-American reality any of the series of observations that he had drawn from his analysis of other societies approximately similar to ours – given their common 'backwardness' with respect to European capitalism – even though he had the knowledge to be able to do so, or at least easily summon up the potential to do so? The question can be posed more succinctly, such that its motivation shines through more clearly: how is it possible that Marx could have evaded Latin-American reality, whether implicitly or explicitly, if the analytical perspective in which he was situating himself should necessarily have impelled him to face up to a fundamental aspect of the economic and political system established by England? To what extent does what seems to be a surprising lack of understanding in fact respond to an underlying political tension, whose causes we should then investigate? In other words, what interests us is to investigate what were the subjective – but as we

shall see, also objective – obstacles that prevented Marx from seeing something *that he necessarily had to see*.

We will try to sketch out a reasoned response to the line of questioning posed, basing ourselves on some working hypotheses whose full development will require a meticulous documentary, analytical and critical effort that is still lacking. But the mere fact that the hypotheses advanced can be considered legitimate and pertinent and not arbitrary ones, allows us to expose the internal tensions of Marx's reflection, derived, in our opinion, from the difficulty he had in fully abandoning the philosophical legacy of Hegel. The residual presence of this inheritance within his conceptions on the national question, to a certain extent maintained due to the conservative effect of an insufficiently updated vocabulary, meant that he projected onto Latin America a reasoning-by-analogy similar to that which he had explicitly rejected in the case of Russia and the Asiatic countries. All this, in turn, will allow us to explain the singular fact that the presence of such reasoning in Marx must be 'deduced' to have been the basis for a gap left where there should, instead, have been the clear proof developed through a positive examination of the question.

It is true that many years passed between one and another of Marx's reflections, years in which the vicissitudes of politics and theoretical advances considerably widened his perspective. However, the very fact that certain terms that were never theoretically grounded, such as the Hegelian duality of 'historic peoples' and 'non-historic peoples', assumed various connotations for Marx and Engels, not only with reference to different periods but also to different regions, and that they maintained positions and value-judgements for some regions that they abandoned in other cases, denotes the strong *political* rather than *ideological* implication behind such terms. But what we are also interested in emphasising, here, is the manner in which the ambiguity and contradiction within such concepts accompanied their incorporation into the body of 'Marxist' theory constituted by the thought of the Second International. As such, it is appropriate to add that wide layers of the Second International upheld a fragmentary perception of the concept of 'non-historic peoples', in particular among the revisionists 'on a detour towards a social-Darwinist understanding of the national phenomenon that was already present in embryo in Engels'.¹

1. Haupt and Weill 1974, p. 290. *Pasado y Presente* translated this essay into Spanish and incorporated it as the introduction to some of the works of Marx and Engels referring to several different national scenarios, from Germany, Russia and Poland to the South Slavic peoples and Turkey: see Marx and Engels 1980. On the issue of 'non-historic peoples' in Marx and Engels, particularly worth consulting is Rosdolsky 1986, a revelatory work, particularly the fourth section of its second part. In a different sense than it acquired among the democratic and socialist currents involved in the European revolutions of 1848–9, the concept of 'non-historic peoples' was clearly present in the 'classic' pre-war socialist work on the national question, Otto Bauer's *The Question of*

Thus the first hypothesis refers to the weight that the philosophical legacy of Hegel may have exerted on Marx's consideration of the 'Latin-American case', given that Hegel, as is well-known, did not assign America any autonomous role in the universal history of the human spirit. As we have just indicated, there was undoubtedly a first stage of Marx's thought where he tended to see non-European realities through Hegelian lenses. As such, there can be no doubt that Asia penetrated Marx's consciousness through the filter of the large section of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* devoted to the 'Oriental world': a section that, we must remember, summarised *philosophically* the far-reaching debate in which European – particularly English and French – thought had engaged on the *economic* and *political* terrain. While some eighteenth-century writers projected onto China a model of society counterposed to the divisions of the decomposing absolutist states, Hegel saw it as typifying a fixed, unmoving phenomenon that persisted *outside of* universal history. It is this idea that Marx picked up again, even if placing greater stress on the counterposition between 'Oriental stagnation' and the uninterrupted advance of Western bourgeois society. In Marx's consideration, the transformative potential of the latter society was expressed in the novelty of the emergence of the first mode of production in history that through its own impulse raised itself to the point of linking together the whole world in an extensive web of production-relations. The constitution of 'universal history' thus appears as a product, as the result, of the universalisation of capitalist relations. As Marx indicates,

The further the separate spheres, which interact on one another, extend in the course of this development, the more the original isolation of the separate nationalities is destroyed by the developed mode of production and intercourse and the division of labour between various nations naturally brought forth by these, the more history becomes world history... From this it follows that this transformation of history into world history is not indeed a mere abstract act on the part of the 'self-consciousness', the world spirit, or of any other metaphysical spectre, but a quite material, empirically verifiable act.²

Nationalities and Social Democracy. For Bauer, 'non-historic peoples' does not refer to a country having some structural incapacity. Rather, it represents the particular situation of a people that, entering a given phase of development after having decapitated its ruling class in a previous stage, cannot then advance its own history and cultural development, while all or some of the peoples surrounding it progress in another direction. For Bauer, moreover, what was happening at the beginning of the century – the first edition of his book appeared in 1907 – to certain Slavic nationalities, in particular the Czechs, showed how the development of capitalism and the formation of the modern state that derived from it were able to bring about 'the extension of the cultural community by releasing the masses from the ties of an omnipotent tradition and inciting them to participate in the transformation of the national culture' (Bauer 2000, pp. 176–7).

2. Marx 1975–20040, pp. 50–1.

The bourgeoisie has subjected the countryside to the rule of the town. It has brought huge cities into being, vastly increasing the urban population as compared with the rural, and thus removing a large proportion of the population from the seclusion and ignorance of rural life. Moreover, just as it has made the country dependent on the town, so it has made the barbarian and the semi-barbarian nations dependent upon the civilised nations, the peasant peoples upon the industrial peoples, the East upon the West.³

Forcefully, via pillage, exploitation and colonial warfare, capitalism violently threw a multiplicity of peoples, nationalities and independent states into the new scenario of universal history that it had created. With this, the problem of the stagnation of Oriental societies – a notion that effectively covered all realities outside of Western Europe – came to be situated, theoretically as well as practically, within the wider field of the debate as to the possibility of promoting all these societies and nations characterised as ‘non-historic’ to the rank of ‘vital’ societies: those able to participate in historical development, to constitute independent states or to count on sufficient forces as to be able to achieve national independence in future. And it was in regard to this question that the ambiguity and contradictory character of Marx and Engels’s use of Hegel’s category was most starkly apparent. After all, their analysis of the South-Slav peoples before and after the revolutions of 1848, or that regarding the possibility of the ‘regeneration’ of the Muslim Turks following the Russian-Turkish war of 1877–8, or on China and India, showed the tendency of both men to consider the question of historic and non-historic peoples as part of a wider framework in which the national aspect was closely related to the degree of historical development of the various peoples and the perspective of the European revolution. Thus the Hegelian categories most of all expressed the persistence of a ‘48er’ language inadequate to defining phenomena that were not reducible to concepts that had now become *politically* obsolete. Claiming to give them a more than figurative meaning carried with it the danger of substituting consideration of the concrete positions assumed by Marx and Engels for the application to current reality of an analytical schema considered valid *a priori*.

Certainly, such concepts do indicate the presence in Marx – and, as we will see, to a rather greater extent in Engels – of prejudices originating in his own ideological and cultural formation, and then reaffirmed in a given historical-political scenario; as such, they could not but influence his future theoretical conceptions and political attitudes. But the bases of a means of advance necessarily going beyond these bounds could only come about via Marxism’s own requirement that history and politics should be incorporated into the reconstruction

3. Marx and Engels 1963, p. 31.

of the analytical field as strongly conditioning elements. The conceptual ambiguity, therefore, expresses the constant disruptive effect that reality has on a theoretical tradition that, as a consequence, can by no means be considered unequivocal. This, in turn, substantially explains the plurality of meanings that the concept of 'non-historic peoples' has bounded between throughout the history of Marxism. As Haupt and Weill indicate in their admirable work on the national question and the legacy of Marx and Engels, the term 'non-historic peoples' might imply that history has irredeemably condemned certain nationalities, in favour of nations whose dynamism and importance *as Europeans* have been proven. However, if the issue is posed in terms of questioning the possibility of non-historic peoples becoming historic ones, the term then becomes a reflection of the dynamic of historical development, rather than a rigid dichotomy:

[I]n this interpretation, the term . . . is used to denote a shade or specific mode of historical existence, a certain stage of history – perpetuated in its development due to the heavy weight of backward structures – which has the possibility of only being a transitory reality, and as such of disappearing in the course of future upheavals and transformations. As such, then, the nation is not the negation of Marxism's fundamental methodological postulate – to capture social phenomena in their historicity – but its transposition and adaptation. A judgement of reality and element of explanation, this term transcends the conjunctural in universal history precisely at the moment that it is shown to be useful for inserting the national phenomenon into a long-term socio-economic process. From this particular use of the ambiguous notion of 'non-historic peoples', always associated with the well-defined concept of national 'oppression' and liberation, are derived certain implications for practice: there is not some wall that mechanically delimits and distinguishes nations ripe for independence from the non-vital ones, in the same way that there is no fixed criterion or general principle of nationality that can be applied to all nations in whatever given circumstance. The national question must be interpreted in relation to the degree of historical development of the various nations and in terms of the context based on which it becomes part of the perspective of a future relation.⁴

If in a first stage of their thought Marx and Engels shared in the profound sympathy for all oppressed European nations that was characteristic of the hegemonic democratic and radical currents of the national struggles culminating in the 1848 Revolution, from the 1850s onwards their positions showed an increasing tendency to rejecting an uncritical stance towards the national-liberation movements, this being based on simple motives of Europe-wide solidarity. Engels

4. Haupt and Weill 1974, pp. 295–6.

recalled in his letter to Bernstein of 22 February 1882 how ‘everyone of us, in so far as he has first gone through a liberal or radical phase, has emerged from it with these feelings of sympathy for all “oppressed” nationalities, and I for one know how much time and study it took me to shake them off – but then it was for good and all’.⁵

It is worth also remembering that this process of change in Marx and Engels’s positions corresponded to a changing reality, in that it was precisely in these years that the ambiguity of the European national movements was brought into sharp relief, including the possibility of their being recuperated by reactionary forces.⁶ For Marx and Engels it was now no longer a matter of affirming each people’s right to historical development as much as gauging to what point the affirmation of this right was or was not in contradiction with revolutionary objectives. The rejection of a purely sentimental attitude was now grounded on

5. Engels 1975–2004b. For his part, Rosdolsky highlighted that, faced with liberal and radical postures that treated the national question from the abstract perspective of justice, the Hegelian conception of the ‘spirit of the people’ represented the first attempt to capture in a spiritual framework – notwithstanding its metaphysical arbitrariness – the apparent chaos of historical events and to understand human history as a process of evolution subject to given laws. In this sense, the Hegelian rejection of ‘sentimentality’ proved its superiority over superficial Mazzinian liberalism, for instance. Thus it is no coincidence that this conception held such weight and persisted for such a long time in a movement like the socialist one, which grounded its existence in the rationality of historical processes. Citing Lassalle, Rosdolsky also showed how this Hegelian conception came to be appropriated by late nineteenth century imperialist policy. Who, if not Hegel, is present in the phrase with which Engels concludes his letter to Danielson arguing that capitalism would inevitably develop in Russia: ‘*Que les destinees s’accomplissent!*’? The connection between the Hegelian formula of the ‘spirit of the people’ and Engels’s own ‘historical destiny’ is transparent, here, showing us the errors to which metaphorical thinking could lead. As Nisbet reminds us, if indeed human thought cannot do without the metaphorical, this becomes extremely dangerous when ‘from the initial encapsulating and iconic vision of something distant, or unknowable in standard terms of analysis, there begin to be drawn corollaries of ever more literal and empirical significance. To look at the whole universe and say it is like a machine or an organism is one thing; forgivable in proper time and place. But to seek to build rigorous propositions of scientific analysis upon either metaphor, mistaking attributes of analogy for attributes of reality, can be, as the history of science teaches us, profoundly limiting and distorting’ (Nisbet 1969, pp. 6–7). From this perspective, we can understand the serious distorting effect that the elevation of Marx’s metaphors of ‘base’ and ‘superstructure’ to ‘scientific’ status had on his thought. See the references that we cite in Note 1 of Chapter Seven.

6. ‘From this perspective . . . the national movements displayed their deep ambiguity and the changes that had taken place in their conception and intentions. Independently of Marx, historians like Hans Kohn, authorities on the subject, accepted that in the second half of the nineteenth century the national movements of the South Slavs “ceased to be considered revolutionary democratic movements and transformed to some degree into conservative and reactionary ones”’ (Haupt and Weill 1974, p. 294). The Kohn citation was taken from his address at the Twelfth International Congress of Historical Sciences, entitled ‘Nationalism and Internationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ (Kohn 1965).

a precise political and theoretical postulate, that of recognising the *historicity* of the concepts of oppression and emancipation.

As Haupt and Weill indicate,

it was not a matter of abstractions existing outside of their time and context or of antinomic categories, but rather of conceptions that covered diverse and unstable historical realities. National emancipation mattered less in itself than because of its consequences. Neither the forms of struggle, such as insurrection, nor the objectives that they attempted to realise, were the relevant criteria of judgement, since there could be a perfect coincidence between an emancipatory struggle fought with revolutionary means and objectives that served the interests of reaction. Thus these movements' importance did not lie exclusively in their driving or hegemonic force, but rather in the historical role that they fulfilled.⁷

The political dynamism of a 'non-historic people' could not consist only in its capacity to express national sentiments and constitute itself into an independent state, but also, and fundamentally, in the need to base the whole of this process on a 'social regeneration' capable of destroying the order on which the colonial rule of the great powers was established, thus fragmenting capitalism's global power. This reasoning implicitly entailed two suppositions on which the possibility of the theoretical and political unity of the 'national' and 'social'

7. Haupt and Weill 1974, p. 300. It is necessary to remember that Marx's reflection on the national question was situated in a period of European society in which the tendency towards the constitution of modern territorial states was indisputable. Today we know the degree to which the constitution of nation-states was a factor of decisive importance in the formation of the world capitalist system. The interdependence of the nations constituted as global units facilitated the internal and external conditions for the global development of capitalism. As Immanuel Wallerstein 2011 highlighted, world-capitalism essentially consists of a combination of economic flows between the developed national economies. Although in many other aspects Marx was very far from a nationalist, 'he accepted the historic role of a certain number of such national-state economies, which was indeed generally assumed in the nineteenth century' (Hobsbawm 1977, p. 4). As Solomon Bloom had already stressed in his previous work on the national question in Marx's thought (Bloom 1941) and Hobsbawm now reminded us, the case for this type of nation-state 'was not nationalist in the current sense, inasmuch as it did not envisage a world of nation-states irrespective of size and resources, but only one of "viable" states of medium to large size'. Thus the essence of the nationalist movements of the nineteenth century did not so much reside in the demand for the fulfilment of an abstract principle as in the attempt to construct 'viable' states, thus tending towards 'unification' and distrusting 'separatism', 'though this was concealed by the fact that most national movements also tended to break up one or more of the surviving obsolete empires of Austria, Turkey and Russia' (Hobsbawm 1977, pp. 4–5). The Hobsbawm article we are glossing here does excellently in bringing up-to-date the discussion on the ambiguity of the national question suggested by Haupt and Weill, an ambiguity that has become extremely aggravated in the present period.

movements rested: a theory of social progress and the entrenched belief in the proximity of a European revolution similar to that which had been defeated in 1848. This explains why the national struggle had to be subordinate to an objective that was always and everywhere the same: the proletariat's struggle for the liberation of all the oppressed. These two suppositions were for their part admissible only on condition of sparing from analysis the postulate essential to the whole theoretical edifice: the recognition of the *universality of the proletariat* that constituted the basic reality of the Marxist theoretical system as expounded in *Capital*. Within this recognition lay, without doubt, the problematic crux and the origin of the contradictions and continual oscillations in the socialist movement's consideration of the national question. Such a problematic also existed within the theory itself, since it showed a methodological misunderstanding destined to bear serious consequences on the capacity of Marxist analysis to account for the characteristics that the process of capitalist development would take on both in Europe and the rest of the world. And finally, in reality, because starting from the *political* presence of the proletariat as the universal class necessarily implied an economistic reductionism that subordinated the multiplicity of social struggles to the *particular* objectives of proletarians. Just like the bourgeoisie, the proletariat only existed as a universal class *in conceptual terms*: in reality, it could only exist as an aggregation of social groups delimited by the nation-state or by the ethnic, linguistic and cultural conjuncture to which it belonged within a multinational state. And, inevitably, politics in terms of the state implied politics in terms of the nation. The fact that this circumstance was not recognised in theory nor, consequently, sufficiently so in practice necessarily led to an ever deeper breach in the socialist movement between a formal internationalism and *de facto* everyday nationalism. Thus the 'universality' of the proletariat was always translated into seeing, whether consciously or not, particular 'national' centres – wherever the working masses' revolutionary energies were most concentrated – as the home of the class's universal attributes: first in England, then in France, after that in Germany and finally in Russia. It is evident that this analytical perspective did appear in Marx, but something that he always substantially qualified with his pressing concern for the concrete, for an elaboration of politics in direct relation to the given conjuncture, was transformed in the thinking of the Second International into a highly ossified conception, a sort of 'philosophy of history' unable to account for the real world, but which the narrowest national sentiments were able to infiltrate. Hence the collapse of 1914, when the working-class, socialist International shattered into as many pieces as there were nations represented in it. This was no coincidence, but rather an absolutely necessary consequence of a political theory and practice that behind the rhetoric of 'internationalism' defended the particular interests of

each national proletariat.⁸ When Marx relativised or abandoned the idea of the progressive idea of capitalist development and hopes for a European revolution in the near future, this also put into question the *a priori* identification of the Western-European proletariat as the revolutionary subject. For this reason it is extremely difficult – not to say impossible – for us to find in Marx formulations such as those that persistently had such strong overtones in Engels's reasoning on the national 'destiny' of certain European peoples. These were residual elements of a Hegelian philosophical-historical stock, which we will again find in sharp relief in Engels's 1880s letters to Kautsky and Bernstein. And though there can be no doubt that Kautsky and Bernstein refused to accept the arguments Engels upheld regarding the South-Slavic peoples, it cannot be denied that they totally shared in the notion of historical progress that these arguments were based on and that contributed to establishing the fundamental principles of the concrete policy of European socialists in general, and the German Social Democracy in particular. It is not inappropriate, here, to remind ourselves of the recommendations that Engels directed to the German Social Democracy in the above-cited letter to Bernstein, holding that it should work to set

the West European proletariat free and subordinate everything else to that goal. No matter how interesting the Balkan Slavs, etc., might be, the moment their desire for liberation clashes with the interests of the proletariat they can go hang for all I care. The Alsatians, too, are oppressed, and I shall be glad when we are once more quit of them. But if, on what is patently the very eve of a revolution, they were to try and provoke a war between France and Germany, once more goading on those two countries and thereby postponing the revolution, I should tell them: Hold hard! Surely you can have as much patience as the European proletariat. When they have liberated themselves, you will automatically be free; but till then, we shan't allow you to put a spoke in the wheel of the militant proletariat. The same applies to the Slavs.⁹

Against the backdrop of the perspective of a revolution similar to that glimpsed prior to 1848, Engels returned in his final years to reaffirming the positions that he had maintained in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* and *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany*. But what we are interested in demonstrating here is how this analytical perspective, at the roots of the European socialist movement, had already previously been questioned by Marx himself when he established through his study of the Irish question that historical discontinuity and unevenness was a characteristic proper to capitalist development itself. This in turn

8. See in particular Appendix Five.

9. See Engels 1975–2004c.

raised further questions, in terms of the basic suppositions and very postulate of 'proletarian' universality as an analytical framework for the examination of national formations, as such raising doubts over the rationality of the capitalist historical process conceived as a 'totality'. This also seriously puts into question the idea of an epicentre of the revolution that gives meaning to social movements for the liberation of the exploited taken as a whole; as a consequence, the latter are now perceived in the positivity of their own position, as distinct from that of the Western-European proletariat. It is not fair to say that Marx clearly and explicitly drew the consequences that such reasoning had for his theoretical system, but there are sufficient proofs for us to be able to imagine that it is a reasoning similar to that which underlay and grounded Marx's realignment of his hitherto 'Western-proletarian' model of revolution. Otherwise it is impossible to understand his texts on Ireland, his surprising statements as to the latent potentialities of the Turkish people, the particular path he made out for the revolution in Russia and the invocation of the primacy of the national question in Poland, whose struggle was such as to have shown by 1875 that: 'As long as the independent life of a nation is suppressed by a foreign conqueror it inevitably directs all its strength, all its efforts and all its energy against the external enemy; during this time, therefore, its inner life remains paralysed; it is incapable of working for social emancipation'.¹⁰ If, for Marx, the theoretical-analytical unit of the 'proletariat'-as-subject could not be confused with the concretely-existing proletariat of the various nations of Western Europe; if its attributes could not be theoretically translated as the attributes of the various determinations of the movements to revolutionise society; if it is the fundamental concept of a theoretical framework from which the bourgeois mode of production and the possibility of its transformation can be explained; then there lies a distance between this framework and reality, a distance that Marx worked to cover in his theoretical elaborations and political practice. It is logical, therefore, that throughout Marx there were constant signs – albeit much more clearly so from 1864 onwards – of a rejection of any type of generalisation that might imply incorporating the national dynamic into his theory of revolution without sufficient political and theoretical caution. All this allows us to affirm the presence in his analyses of a recognition – clearly, not always an explicit one – of the 'autonomy' of the national sphere, based on which, *and only based on which*, the question of social revolution can be thought of in concrete terms, or, to put it another way, the question of the concrete possibilities of a conjunction between the fight for national emancipation and the process of class-struggle'. But the inescapable condition – and it is

10. Marx and Engels 1975–2004b. [The Spanish translation quoted by Aricó reads: 'As long as a *vital* people is suppressed...' rather than 'As long as the independent life of a nation is suppressed...' – DB.]

no coincidence that he reiterated the word in his discussion of Poland that we just cited – is that the people in struggle is 'vital', demonstrating its will to fight to conquer its own destiny, battling to become a 'historic people'. It is precisely the presence of this potential to take the historical initiative that Marx discovers in the national struggles that he analyses and defines with all the force of his critical reflection and revolutionary passion. His attention is not devoted to how capitalism will irreversibly push all peoples into a single universal history that it creates all by itself like some tyrant, but rather on the identification of those elements within each people that might prevent its becoming subjected or the continuation of the colonial régime. We might imagine that, in considering the presence of 'national dynamism' a precondition of national struggle, Marx ran into the same kind of idealist ambiguities as Engels did in denying that the 'remnants of nations' crushed by the great European powers could be considered 'vital nations'. However, this is a false analogy to the extent that the problem is not a matter of agreeing in the *here and now* that each oppressed people will have its own national future, but rather of condemning them to eternal decline on the basis of historical considerations of Hegelian stock such as the 'spirit of the people', or this idealist essentialism being dressed up as the need 'to give an impulse to social development'. It is surprising upon checking to note that all these 'remnants of peoples' condemned to inevitable extinction by Engels in 1849 are precisely those that today wage the most energetic and mass-based struggles for their national independence, namely the Scots, Welsh, Basques, and so on.¹¹

11. Engels wrote: 'There is no country in Europe which does not have in some corner or other one or several ruined fragments of peoples, the remnant of a former population that was suppressed and held in bondage by the nation which later became the main vehicle of historical development. These relics of a nation mercilessly trampled under foot in the course of history, as Hegel says, these *residual fragments of peoples* always become fanatical standard-bearers of counter-revolution and remain so until their complete extirpation or loss of their national character, just as their whole existence in general is itself a protest against a great historical revolution... That this residual fragment, which is likewise extremely confused, sees its salvation only in a reversal of the whole European movement, which in its view ought to go not from west to east, but from east to west, and that for it the instrument of liberation and the bond of unity is the *Russian knout* – that is the most natural thing in the world.' (Engels 1975–2004d). The text is a revealing one, given the equivalence Engels draws between a nation undergoing 'extirpation' and 'counter-revolution', to the extent that it represents an obstacle to the 'great historical revolution' expressed by capitalist advance. The critique of any 'particularism', of all 'separatism', as reactionary and 'anti-historical' insofar as it conspires against the fusion of European humanity into large political and economic units, means that Engels falls into the same conceptions as the Historical School of Law ridiculed by Marx. The fact that he maintained this conception right to the end of his life showed the persistence in Engels's thought of an understanding of the Central-European revolution such as it had played out in 1848. At the end of his life, the accelerated growth of the German Social Democracy confirmed him in his belief that socialist transformation in

We can summarise the above discussion with the affirmation that the 'Eurocentric' residues in Marx were effectively overcome when he ceased to identify capitalist development and the presence of an internationally homogeneous working class with the conditions of the 'liberation' of the oppressed peoples and, moreover, ceased to subordinate the latter to the activity of the Western-European proletariat. On the contrary, Marx began to see the possibility that the struggles of these peoples could upset the stability of the world capitalist order, even within Europe itself. The disdainful references to the 'idiocy of village life' gave way to a reappraisal of the role of the peasantry and communal structures that had existed prior to the capitalist penetration of the soil in Western Europe, but were still very much alive in South-Eastern Europe and Russia. Such ideas are easily identifiable in the different perspective from which Marx, distancing himself from Engels, analysed social struggles in Russia. The theoretical and political presuppositions from which the 'autonomy' of the Latin-American region could have been understood, then, did exist in Marx's thought. As such, it is erroneous to imagine that if this reality was not, indeed, thought in such terms, then this is entirely attributable to strong 'Eurocentric' elements in his thought.

Europe would follow from an essentially *German* revolution 'that would have to solve the same problems as before, with the same allies (the Hungarians and Poles) as well as the same enemies (the nonhistoric Slavs supported by Tsarism)' (Rosdolsky 1986, p. 131). As Rosdolsky aptly explained 'The closer Engels thought he was to the longed-for socialist transformation of society, the shorter the lifespan he was ready to allot to capitalism, the more he overestimated the tempo of historical evolution – the more decisively he rejected national particularism. This and *only* this made Engels hold fast to "the consequences of the historical process"' (Rosdolsky 1986, p. 130). The fact that from the 1870s Marx began to question the idea of an immutably reactionary Russia, and thus ceased to be frightened by some Pan-Slavic threat, led him to question the ideas that he had shared with Engels in 1848 even to the point of discerning the possibility of a Russian revolution that could spark a process disrupting the stability of Europe.

Chapter Six

Hegel *Redivivus*

But even when we reject as insufficient or simplistic the given explanations with regard to Marx's supposed theoretical and political blindness, which we regard as 'paradoxical' given that we have found that already in the mid-1850s he was in possession of the fundamental components of a methodology whose application allowed him to analyse the most difficult problems of certain 'dependent' or 'backward' social formations with surprising sharpness, in our view the initial question can only be answered if we abandon the abstract terrain in which certain of these notions are situated in order to relocate them in a thematic sphere within which the spectre of irrationality or certainty in history revolves. The same failed explanations emerge again, but as residues, ideological aromas that seep through the pores of Marxian political discourse. As such, we will attempt a response that denies that which is always in front of our eyes, that will allow us to explain the known by that which is still not known, the existing but still hidden, that which is habitually described as 'Eurocentric', and, as such, only appears as a historical paradox. Recognising that Marx's investigation in this sphere was very much devoted to the search for a law of history – derived less from Hegel than from a whole tradition of thought that was caught up in the dominant trajectory of Western thinking – we will attempt to identify what motives might have prevented Marx from a focus on Latin America beginning from a reasoning similar to that which allowed him to

achieve a stunning degree of 'modernity' in his consideration of national situations, as compared to his contemporaries.

Here, we will allow ourselves to begin a more specific elucidation of the problem, accepting a commonplace idea that Marx was unaware of our continent's reality because he did not 'see' the concrete historical process of the constitution of the Latin-American nations, and thus was ever more given to recognise in Ireland, China, India, Spain, Russia and even Turkey what he did not seem disposed to recognise in countries like Mexico, Argentina and Brazil, for example. Not because he explicitly denied it in theory, but because of his inability to recognise it in the concrete struggles of these peoples. Having questioned the idea strongly rooted in European culture – with Hegel as its totalising philosophical expression – as to a process of *historical repetition*, the stragglers following the lead of the more advanced nations, the task incumbent on Marx was to analyse the political, economic and social characteristics of the present that made it possible to foresee the future national realisation of the countries subjected by capitalism. A return to the histories of these peoples and a study of the integrity and solidity of their social structures were the path that Marx necessarily had to follow if he was to anchor the 'material' foundation of their capacity to become nations in social relations. A people could become 'historic' only on the condition that it had a socio-economic structure that would allow for this, and a social force capable of hegemonising the whole process. Marx affirmed the presence of these characteristics in each of the cases that he analysed.¹

But where in Latin America can the *real foundations* for the struggle for national realisation be found? If, in the time of Marx's reflection, America appeared as a vast *empty* territory,² able to absorb the population-surplus of Europe resulting from capitalist development, its scarce indigenous population considered as tribes still steeped in an original state of savagery and lack of culture; if the South-American republics' social structures were based exclusively on the ordering, despotic presence of a military power; if America had not made a forward step in the development of its basic constitutive elements in this period; then America was set in a historical time whose essential, autonomous, proper determinations would have to be carried out in the future. In this sense, Marx could identify with the words of his teacher Hegel, whose *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* stated that what happened in the New World was nothing but the echo of the Old World and, therefore, the reflection of a life foreign to it. America

1. A relevant example of what we are raising, here, can be found in Marx's analysis of the Spanish Revolution – see Appendix Six.

2. On the relationship between the 'empty' territory and the possibility of state-building in America, it is always useful to return to Hegel's considerations in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, discussed in our Appendix Two.

still had to separate itself from the terrain on which universal history had been developing up to that point; but this was only a probability, the conditions for its realisation still impossible to foresee. If, in conceiving of America as a land of the future, Hegel allowed himself to leave it out of his considerations, given that the function of philosophy with regard to history is only to account for what is and has been, then Marx had even more reason to exclude it from his field of interest if he could not clearly discern within it the conditions for its transformation and the concrete possibilities for it to rise to the level of history precisely in virtue of this transformation.

The formation of real American states belonged, then, to a future that it was impossible to say anything about, given that the conditions of their creation were still impossible to discern in the present. For want of these essential determinations, America could represent nothing more than an extension of Europe, its reflection, even though having cleared away the obstacles that oppressed European thought and culture: as Hegel notes, it was no more than 'a land of desire for all those who are weary of the historical lumber-room of old Europe'.³ Condemned to a present only open to immediate change in the sense of the prospect of repeating the path taken by Europe, America was solely of interest in terms of its *external* relation to Europe; the latter was recognised in the former, and thus this unique American mirror could help deepen an understanding of Europe, its limitations and inherent possibilities: 'America' only existed in 'Europe'.

This is undoubtedly the vision underlying Marx and Engels's texts on Latin America, texts which, as we will continue to insist, are not as scant as is often believed. Starting from this vision, Latin America was considered in its exteriority, its status as a reflection of Europe, because its interiority was *impossible to grasp*, and as such, non-existent. Social transformations – and the process of the formation of the Latin-American nations was, certainly, a social transformation of great significance – always presupposed the presence of a passive element, a 'material base' setting the limits of the possibilities of such transformations. Given the threat that theory might become an abstraction at odds with the really-existing world, it could only be realised to the degree that it could rely on the realisation of the social process that would inevitably bring about part of its 'expressed form'. But the world of the needs and demands of the Latin-American peoples, the historical and cultural constants that could explain the anomaly of the latent persistence of a continental perspective at the same time as the search for particular identity in a process of national realisation fragmenting the unity of the region – these very complicated processes of composition and decomposition – also posed further questions. Were these processes of such substance, of

3. Hegel 1991, p. 86.

such historical and structural coherence as to be appraised as distinct categories? Was there the potential for their inner ossification to be prised open by a laborious conceptual effort, the constant confrontation between theory and facts, or even the formulation of a 'particular', 'autonomous' theory that might explain them? After all, as was well-established by Hegel, not everything that exists is 'real' and thus 'rational' by the mere fact of existing. It is not sufficient for the concept to struggle to reach the level of reality; rather, that reality itself has reached such a degree of regularity that it can demand its own conceptualisation. Although the categorial structure cannot in any sense be reduced to a mere reflection of the real process, from the perspective of Marxism it is undeniable that the logical-structural dominion of a *form* of process defines the variety and complexity of the historical phase, without however being able to resolve or overcome it. Marx's questioning of historicism, and his consequent inversion of the nexus between past and present necessarily presupposed subordinating history itself to the 'historical time' of the given social formation, which in turn implied reconstructing history on the basis of the *systematic character* of the present. But only to the extent that such a present can be systematised – that is to say, that it is a 'fulfilled totality' – does it allow us to retrace the path and reconstruct the 'genesis' of the historical process. (As Marx said, it is the anatomy of the man that allows us to understand the anatomy of the monkey.) It was, therefore, not through going back through the course of history that Marx could identify – or, to put it a different way, 'envisage' – the irreversible process of the Latin-American peoples becoming nations. However, if, indeed, it is certain that in some measure the level of 'typicality'⁴ reached by the 'nation-building' movement – itself a particular characteristic of the epoch of capitalist expansion – allowed Marx to read the real Latin-American process while situating himself in the European *present*, we can also be sure of the evident impossibility of comparing processes as distinct as those taking place in Europe or Asia with regard to the emergence of nations in our continent.

The rupture with the Spanish and Portuguese colonial order opened the way to a rapid fragmentation of the unity of the colonial territories and to the establishment of a series of formally sovereign states, which already by the mid-nineteenth century had largely defined their national borders. However, it remains impossible to find in this process of state-building anything identical or even similar to what had taken place in Europe, for example. The transformation of the European nationalities into sovereign nation-states, the dominant aspect of the continent's experience of the nineteenth century, presupposed that groups of men already defined as 'nations' should serve as the subject of transformation.

4. This is simply a means of designating the systematic character of the process.

They were defined by their sense of identification with a common history via their common culture, shared ethnicity, and, increasingly importantly, a language that they could recognise as their own. These characteristics do not always appear in identical form, but the fact remains that the more or less rapid transformation of Europe's social and economic structures posed the historical and cultural diversity of the European social fabric as a matter of 'nationalities'. National renaissance and the struggle to establish an independent nation invariably presupposed a prior work of recollecting and rediscovering a popular culture based on the peasantry, and the intellectuals drawing a hitherto unknown connection between the popular masses and the possibility of their transformation into a historical force.⁵

The case of Latin America is unique insofar as none of the distinct features of the European process – existing only in part – seem to characterise our own: neither did the presence of ethnic or linguistic differences establish an insuperable breach between the colonising power and the colonial élite – such differences did exist, but they were in effect marginal given that the elites who hegemonised the process of transition to the establishment of independent states belonged ethnically and linguistically to the colonising power itself⁶ – nor did the existence of an oral culture dating back to before the Spanish and Portuguese high culture or some memory of national unity prior to conquest serve as a myth able to cement the 'national idea'. I will repeat that these things did exist to some extent – in some regions, rather strongly so – but in general they represented a history parallel to and in contradiction with the process of state-formation.

In most cases – and, in this sense, Mexico and Peru are rather an exception – there did not exist either a strong élite or bourgeois nationalism or a mass nationalism of sufficient extent as to be able to explain the national dynamics of Latin America. Nor can the latent – indeed, very often dangerously active – mood

5. The European process was, in reality, rather more complex, contradictory and multifaceted than is described above. In the first place, because the movement for the establishment of nation states was not necessarily identified with 'nationalism' (for instance Germany and Italy); in the second place, because the movements that incarnated the 'national idea' were rather different amongst themselves, not only in their characteristics and programmes but also in their social composition. As against the élite or bourgeois nationalisms characteristic of the German and Italian movements, there existed mass nationalisms such as those of the Czechs and other South-Slav nationalities. To these we must add the mimicking of nationalism or 'proto-nationalism', as Hobsbawm calls it, represented by the peasants' and mountain-peoples' rebellions against foreign domination, even if their only cement was a certain awareness of oppression, xenophobia and a vague sense of ethnic identity (the Slav nationalities subjected to Turkish rule), and so on. See Chapter Five of Hobsbawm 1975.

6. The case of Haiti is very telling, an example of the great threat posed by a movement that, not being hegemonised from above, had tendencies to go beyond the boundaries imposed on the process.

of opposition to the wars of independence, characterising wide layers of the Latin-American masses, be considered a 'national' sentiment. The struggle against the urban elites and renewed domination, as expressed in the numerous rebellions of the peasantry and indigenous and black people, was not inspired by some 'national idea', but rather by a violent rejection of oppression, itself identified with the Jacobin form of the independence movement in the cities. If we take Cuba as an exception – not coincidentally, a much-belated experience, where for various reasons the independence struggle acquired the characteristics of a movement strongly rooted among the masses – in the other Latin-American countries 'national' construction tended to mean a long period of a purely state-driven process, led by minorities defending their sectional interests and not expressing the will of the nation. Moreover, tellingly, this was characterised by the continuity of the colonial territorial units in the borders of the independent states.

In Latin America, therefore, the whole process seemed to have been turned on its head, such that the 'nation' was not the fulfilment in state-form of an 'unredeemed' nationality, but rather the construction of an unprecedented reality. If the nation was a point of arrival, an open possibility in history whose necessity could not be affirmed without evidence of the presence of a force or hegemonic class capable of national construction, it is far from inexplicable that Marx should have felt inclined to exclude this whole process from his field of interest. We should not cite in his defence – as has been done – the inexistence of social upheavals of the same significance as the Chinese revolution or the Hindu uprisings, because it is easy to identify social struggles of substantial importance that took place in Latin America during the period of Marx's reflection. Rather, it was essentially the *characteristics* of the process, more than their *weakness* or inexistence, that motivated Marx's stance of disregarding a historical-social dynamic that violently clashed with his own conception of the state. If a foundational principle of his thought was the rejection of the state as a centre of production of civil society;⁷ and if, as Marx several times reiterated, including in his observations on Maine, 'the supposed independent and supreme existence of

7. We use the concept of 'civil society' in the Hegelian sense, that is, as a sphere or 'moment' of the system of necessities in which 'individuals in their capacity as burghers in this state are *private persons* whose end is their own interest' (Hegel 1967, §187). To put it another way, 'civil society' is a figure of a free-competition modern capitalist society in an economic and pre-state terrain, even though in the strict sense the nation, for Hegel, presupposed the state as the prior condition for civil society. Civil society is the [stage of] difference which intervenes between the family and the state, even if its formation follows later in time than that of the state' (Hegel 1967, §182). But it is no coincidence that Hegel himself raises the point in relation to civil society that 'Political economy is the science which starts from this view' (Hegel 1967, §190). In sum, and to simplify further, we can affirm that, for Hegel, civil society is the reign of *homo oeconomicus*.

the state is only apparent, and . . . in all its forms it is an *excrecence* on society';⁸ then his vision of Latin-American civil society as the reign of caprice necessarily implied disregarding the processes of state-construction actually taking place there. As such, in these processes he could only see arbitrariness, absurdity, and, ultimately, authoritarian irrationality.

We have suggested that Marx saw that it was only possible to define a process in its distinctive characteristics after starting from a historical *present*, namely a particular moment in the development of a process in which one determinate relation shows its capacity to articulate all other relations by assigning them specific functions and determinations. But what he did not 'see' was the real existence of this 'determinate relation', since his starting point meant that he systematically refused to situate this within the state. What actually was the Latin-American 'present', for Marx? An inexplicable multiplicity of extremely weak states, run either by narrow oligarchies lacking a national spirit or by *caudillos*, largely military men, unable to hold back territorial fragmentation and ensure the continuance of a national authority except by means of ferocious yet almost always ephemeral dictatorships; feeble countries economically dominated and politically subaltern to capitalist imperialism. The various national formations thus seemed to him to be mere state edifices built on top of an institutional vacuum and the absence of any popular will, incapable of establishing itself due to the gelatinous social fabric. The wars of independence did not, then, carry forth a wide movement of social renovation, but rather attempts to set up a new order able to rein in chaotic plebeian violence. As such, the will of the state, that of the creole élite, persistently clashed with the constant popular rebellions aggravated by racial, regional, caste and class tensions, rebellions that were more often than not dressed up in the ideological 'colours' of xenophobia, defence of religious tradition and the dream of a return to a past order that had been disrupted by independence. The ossifying character of this whole process; the distasteful character of a hegemonic class ever more inclined to identify the nation with the state; and the manifest incapacity of the popular classes to carry forth a project of 'social regeneration'; were all elements that, in our view, led Marx to 'exclude' from his thought a reality that appeared to his eyes as the untrammelled advance of Bonapartism and European reaction.

8. Marx's observations on Henry Sumner Maine's *Lectures on the Early History of Institutions* are quoted from Marx 1972, p. 359.

Chapter Seven

The Political Reasons for a Disconnection

Starting from the significant ‘absence’ in Marx’s reflection of a region of decisive importance to the coming together of the bourgeois cosmos, we have tried to reconstruct a reading of Latin America by Marx that was *apparently* not explicit, a reading that, surprisingly, returns us to the dialogue that he maintained with Hegel, sometimes explicit but in general implicit, but never completed. It is interesting to note that behind the surreptitious return to the idea of ‘non-historic peoples’ or the rejection of the state’s role in producing civil society, implicitly present in Marx’s reading, in fact there lies a Hegel that had supposedly been ‘overcome’, an inseparable component of the prejudices that took root in the ideological and cultural formation of Marx’s thought. If, as we have already stated, Marx never grounded the notion of ‘non-historic peoples’ theoretically, and it belonged rather more to the rich and contradictory world of allegories that he so indulged in,¹ and thus his utilisation

1. Marx’s manifest penchant for using allegories and metaphors even in his youth was a subject of his teachers’ criticism. One of them, Wytttenbach, reproached him for an ‘exaggerated effort to use unusual and picturesque expressions’. Many years later, one of his best-known followers, Eduard Bernstein, levelled a similar criticism against him. Franz Mehring was one of the few Marxists who raised the theme of Marx’s writing style in these years, showing how his allegories represented ‘the sensorily appreciable mother of the thought, which receives from that mother the breath of life.’ See Riazanov 1927, pp. 95–101. The incomprehension of Marx’s allegorical style by bourgeois ‘sages’ curiously also characterised the whole of the socialist movement that based its founding theoretical principles in Marx’s doctrine. Everything that ‘official’ science rejected as the ‘dark mysticism’ of Marxism was directly appropriated as ‘science’ by the socialist movement. Meanwhile, Marx’s great metaphors (‘superstructure’, ‘reflection’, ‘fetishism’, and so on)

of this concept was of a strongly political rather than ideological implication, then what political facts – or better, what prejudiced means of considering them – could have led Marx to again dig up this idea for use in the Latin-American case, when he had so manifestly abandoned it with regard to other scenarios from the 1850s onwards? As we will attempt to demonstrate, it is in Marx's sharp anti-Bonapartism that we can locate the *political* motives that led to his resurrection of this notion and the blind-spot to which his thought was consequently doomed.

In the Europe of the second half of the nineteenth century, Napoleon III was the ruler most involved in the Latin-American nations' attempts to become involved in the European cultural and political scene. The 'rediscovery' of America by the French Empire curiously led to the development of an idea destined to hold firm as a solution to the difficulty that European consciousness had long faced in understanding the new reality emerging from the collapse of the colonial order, a difficulty that had also already been sharply identified by Humboldt.² If 'Hispano-America' was a return to a past that had now largely been overcome, how then to describe this surprising concentration of republics to which the avid eyes of European – particularly French – capitalism were now turned? Where was it possible to locate the historical grounds for this challenge to the unquestioned power of English imperialism? What, then, were the ideological motivations – but also, and perhaps fundamentally, political ones – that led to their being designated 'Latin'? If there is evidence enough that this adjective was only clearly picked out in the France of Napoleon III, on the eve of the French and European military and scientific expedition to Mexico, there can be no doubt that the thirst for this concept was in large part derived from the need for an ideological coating able to legitimise the foreign policy of 'protecting

were considered to be complete *scientific* explanations of certain processes. In taking the 'superstructure' metaphor to be a scientific explanation, for example, Marxists converted a figure of speech, designed to *illustrate* something, into a means of its explanation. They unintentionally turned upside down 'everything that Marx had worked to stand on its feet'. As such, Marx became an *ideologue*, namely precisely that which he had sought to destroy through his materialist conception of history. On this theme, which has still been little-explored, it is worth mentioning an excellent essay that Spanish-language publicists of Marxism appear to have made little use of, namely Ludovico Silva's work on Marx's literary style (Silva 1971, particularly pp. 52–91).

2. 'To avoid fastidious circumlocutions, I continue in this study to designate the countries inhabited by *Spanish-Americans* by the name *Spanish-America*, despite the political changes that the colonies have undergone. I call the *United States* – without adding *north America* – the country of *Anglo-Americans*, although other *United States* have formed in south America. It is awkward to speak of peoples who play such an important role on the world scene, but who lack collective names. The word *American* may no longer be applied exclusively to the citizens of the United States of North America, and it would be desirable if this nomenclature for the independent nations of the new continent could be fixed in a way that would be at once convenient, consistent and precise' (Humboldt 2011, p. 209).

nationalities' that characterised the Bonapartist Empire's struggle for the conquest of European hegemony. Faced with the reticence or the open hostility of the traditional forces of European reaction, France had to appear before the world as the champion of the nationalities, the unconditional ally of the 'unredeemed' peoples crushed after the defeat of 1848. France's manifest destiny was therefore posed in its declared intention to contribute to the struggle for national unity and independent states for each of the divided European countries, in the first place Italy. And in function of this task, which hid the distasteful plans of a backward capitalism with pretensions of power behind the high ideals of the revolution of 1789, France had to proclaim itself the leadership and protector of the 'Latin' races. Such was the argument with which it supported Piedmont in its struggle for the unification of Italy; but it was also the ideological foundation of the ill-fated intervention in Mexico. If the idea of the 'Hispanic' world had served to unify the immense territory conquered by Spain and Portugal, once the colonial order had been destroyed it was necessary to find some new concept that while rejecting this past could nonetheless characterise the distinctive features that united the continent. For this reason, the discovery of the 'Latin' character that joined together the South-American republics was nothing but an ideological expression of the Bonapartist desire to win them economically, politically and culturally to the new order hegemonised by France that Napoleon III dreamed of creating. This is what régime ideologue and senator Michel Chevalier demonstrated with stark clarity:

France, heir of the European Catholic nations, in America and the world upholds the flame of the Latin races, namely the French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. The guarantee of peace and civilisation, this flame helps light the way of the 'effective concord' between Paris and London. However, apart from this, the decadence that afflicts Italy, Spain and Portugal, the Catholic and Latin nations of Europe, runs the risk of worsening to the advantage the heretic nations – Russia, Prussia and Turkey – unless a new alliance regenerates them, under the aegis of Napoleon III. Beyond the seas, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the rise of the Protestant nations and the Anglo-Saxon race is so evident that in America neither Brazil nor Cuba are in fit condition to counterbalance the influence of the United States by themselves. As such, now is the time for us to unite in Europe to help the 'Latin' nations, our American brothers, to find the road of progress that France has discovered for itself, and in the first place to give effective support to Mexico to hold back the expansion of the United States.³

3. Michel Chevalier's 1863 *Le Mexique ancien et moderne*, quoted in Martinière 1978, p. 37.

The designation invented by the French colonialists managed to survive the tumultuous collapse of the Mexican adventure and even that of the Bonapartist Empire itself. Enthusiastically adopted by the elites of the young Hispano-American states as a means of reaffirming their break with the colonial past and the rejection of Yankee expansionism, the term came to take on real meaning: to be 'realised', in Marx's expression. In the last third of the nineteenth century, and sustained by the powerful effects of the positivist cultural recomposition, the American republics turned into 'Latin' republics identified with the Great French Republic guiding the world towards civilisation and progress. Their growing ideological and cultural – more than economic – subordination to France reached its maximum expression in the First World War, when the American intelligentsia turned the sordid interests of European and particularly French imperialism into the noble principles of civilisation and liberty. That very moment saw the completion in French and South-American ruling-class minds of the conception of 'a Latin civilisation, a true east-west axis, the symbol of an extension of a humanist Europe, heir to the Greco-Roman world, into this New World with such a wealth of prospects: the Latin 'republics' of America.'⁴

It is interesting to note how the crisis of legitimacy that followed the War and the catharsis of the Russian Revolution opened up a new period in Latin America, a renewed search for identity once again expressed in the dispute over labels. The first ideological and political movement born in post-war Latin America was wrapped up in the folds of 'Indo-Americanism'; the first review that sought to define Latin-American singularity could find in the 'old' America a title for its new way of seeing Europe and the world.

The identification of the Latin-American republics with the Bonapartist project may have led Marx to undervalue the national dynamic in the countries of our continent, in the same way that for many years the struggle against Tsarism,

4. Martinière 1978, p. 40. On the debate over the meanings and origins of the term 'Latin America' see the very interesting essay of Phelan 1979. In the same sense as the text above, Phelan shows that while Chevalier expressed the idea of Latin America, it was not him who coined this name. Its first appearance was in 1861, in connection with the French expedition to Mexico (p. 19). The second wave of Pan-Latinist sentiment in the years 1898–1914, though notably different from the first one under Napoleon III, pursued the same aim of promoting the cultural and political homogeneity of Latin America under French leadership. At all events, the facts and information marshalled by Phelan clearly demonstrate how 'the doctrine of Latin regeneration was a creation of the Second Empire, carefully nurtured by semi-official régime apologists' (p. 20). As Phelan concludes, for Americanists, the parentage of the idea of Latin America, or indeed any other such designation, shows how far 'America is, among many other things, an idea created by Europeans, a metaphysical, metahistorical abstraction, at the same time as a practical programme of action. These European images of the New World found their proper symbols in the various names under which America was known (p. 21) [A note from the Second Edition].

that bastion of European reaction, impelled him to disregard the South-Slav peoples' struggle for their national realisation and to undervalue, at least until 1859, any study of the social forces within Russia that pointed to revolutionary transformation. The idea that such a consideration could have decisively influenced Marx's attitude can be demonstrated by a close analysis of the text in which he reflected more passionately and extensively on a matter tied in with our reality. We are referring, of course, to his article on Bolivar, which, seen from the perspective that we are trying to explain, becomes of paradigmatic importance.⁵

5. *Bolívar y Ponte*, reproduced in Appendix Nine. Originally written in January 1858, it was published in *The New American Cyclopedia*. It was first reprinted by New York's International Publishers in their 1939 collection *Revolution in Spain*. Marx's work does not, in reality, have any importance other than what it tells us about the author himself, and this is the point of view from which we will consider it. It is, however, undoubtedly exceptional as an explicit and implicit testament to his thought with regard to Latin America. As such we considered it worth including at the back of this volume.

Chapter Eight

Marx's Bolivar

It was undoubtedly something of a mischance that led Marx to write his article on Bolivar. Signed in 1857 by Charles Dana, director of the *New York Daily Tribune*, to contribute to the *New American Cyclopedia* then being put together with pieces on military history, biography and various other themes, Marx divided up the work with Engels, and it was his fate to have to do the Bolivar article. The outcome of his readings in view of writing the piece was a sense of animosity towards his subject so sharp that it could not but have a remarkably prejudicial effect on the tone of his work. Following Dana's understandable objections to a text at odds with the kind of impartial language that would be expected in such a publication, Marx admitted in a letter to Engels that he 'departed somewhat from the tone of a cyclopaedia. To see the dastardly, most miserable and meanest of blackguards described as Napoleon I was altogether too much. Bolivar is a veritable Soulouque'.¹ The comparison is a revealing one, because it was precisely the name of the Haitian emperor that both Marx and Engels turned to in order to ridicule Louis-Napoleon III. The fact that Marx had never previously contemplated Bolivar, and yet when he did have to write about him felt compelled to launch an extensive, hackneyed diatribe in which the Latin-American revolutionary was identified with a third person – a figure he repudiated as strongly as the

1. Marx 1975–2004j. In an article of 7 June 1883 ('George Weerth', MECW Vol. 26, pp. 108–11), Engels stated that the 'the negro king Soulouque in Haiti' was 'the real original of Louis-Napoleon III'.

French emperor of the time – shows clearly enough that Marx saw in Bolívar an imitation of Napoleon III, or, more precisely, some sort of Bonapartist dictator.

Marx's article would have an extraordinary fate. Practically unknown until 1934, when it was included in the Russian-language edition of Marx and Engels's works, Aníbal Ponce allowed its 'rediscovery' in the Spanish-speaking world by republishing it in the first issue of his journal *Dialéctica* in March 1936.² From 1937 onwards it was part of the compilation of Marx and Engels's works on *La revolución española*, albeit without any editors' notes commenting on the text or justifying its inclusion.³ As late as 1951 the US Communist leader William Z. Foster quoted it favourably in his *Outline Political History of the Americas*: this can be explained in terms of an uncritical acceptance of trends in Soviet historiography, rather than of Marx's texts themselves. We should remember that for a long period – until the eve of the Twentieth Congress, even according to Soviet historians themselves – the opinions of Soviet Latin-Americanists, decisively influenced by Vladimir Mikhailovich Miroshevski and his school, coincided with Marx's view of Bolívar, developed into a negative characterisation of the Latin-American wars of independence. Emphasising the limited national and popular character of the revolutionary process that led to the creation of the independent

2. See Appendix Eight.

3. Alperovich 1976, p. 61. This article offers good coverage of the development of Soviet historiography's approach towards Latin America, even if it does not analyse in any close detail the reasons for this development. Identifying the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU as decisive in creating conditions favourable to a fresh examination of Latin-American history does not go very far in clarifying why the assessments made in the previous period were mistaken. Attributing the narrowness of such conceptions to 'the cult of Stalin and the consequent conditions of the time', Alperovich does however add a consideration that, in our view, represents a useful working hypothesis and coincides with our present reflections on the relation between Marxist thought and Latin America. According to Alperovich, the few works on the subject published in the previous period 'referred to the history of certain Latin-American countries (Mexico, Argentina, Cuba, Panama, Paraguay, Haiti), their authors focusing on the problem of the imperialist expansion of the United States and questions of the labour movement and agrarian matters. Thus in the majority of the studies published, the nations of Latin America appeared as mere objects of the aggressive policy of US imperialism. Likewise, in reality the domestic or national history of the various Latin-American countries... even the aforementioned ones, was investigated only to an inadequate extent; the majority of countries remained outside of the narrow range of Soviet historians' interest' (Alperovich 1976, pp. 53–4). In other words, the reasons for the conceptual errors lay in the fact that the nations of our continent were considered exclusively through the prism of imperialism or else from the perspective of the (let me add, international) workers' movement. Latin America, and the collection of nations that it comprises, were, therefore, only considered in their *exteriority*. Alperovich omits to mention that this was possible in large part because Soviet historiography represented a theoretical and historical systematisation of the concrete experience of the Comintern and the Communist Parties. On the relation between historiography and politics in the Communist movement, and more specifically in terms of the example of Mariátegui, see our introduction to AAVV 1978, pp. xi–lvi and in particular pp. xxiii–xxix and xxxiii–xl. This work was also published as Aricó 1978.

states, they only saw in this 'the private initiative of a clutch of "creole separatists" who could not count on the support of the masses'.⁴ Similarly, they upheld Marx's appraisal of the various personalities of the liberation movement – and that movement itself. When these positions were abandoned, Marx's judgements also came into question. The 1959 second Russian edition of Marx and Engels's writings did include a severe critique of the positions sustained by the article in question, though the explanation for these errors was located in the insufficient and partial sources that Marx used:

Naturally Marx had at that time no other sources at his disposal than the books of the authors mentioned, whose bias was then only little known. It was, therefore, inevitable that Marx got a one-sided view of Bolivar's personality which was reflected in his essay. This striving of Bolivar's for personal power, which was exaggerated in the literature mentioned, could not remain without influence on Marx's attitude toward Bolivar...⁵

4. The new Soviet compilation of Marx and Engels's texts on Spain, issued by Progress Publishers in Moscow in 1974, abandoned the previous criteria, and now did not include the article on Bolivar. As in the previous editions, and unlike what might be expected with this type of publication, there was still no note for clarification by the editors.

5. *Marx-Engels Werke* Vol. 14, p. 743, cited in Draper 1968. Draper correctly cited the political motivation behind Marx's adverse judgement of Bolivar, but leaves aside a problem that in our eyes remains fundamental. If indeed Marx had a recurring tendency to use a set of old-fashioned values when speaking of personalities, he left this aside when appraising events. Why, in his article on Bolivar, is his judgement on the realities of Latin-American independence totally led astray by this set of criteria? The problem must again be posed. The reduction of the Bolivarian phenomenon to just another example of Bonapartism caught Marx in the same polemical trap that he fell into with his excessive personalisation of the Napoleon III régime. It is striking to note how this personalisation, totally at odds with his own analytical method, led his analysis of Second Empire France to disregard the transformations taking place in its industrial base and to overestimate the importance of the parasitic and degenerative characteristics of its political and financial aspects. As Rubel argues, 'the passion of the polemicist persistently predominated over the study of the multifaceted succession of events. Marx refused to pay any attention to Bonapartism's economic function; he contented himself with considering its military ambitions, financial acrobatics and "political troubles"... We would have expected that a "materialist" would give a more penetrating analysis of its economic determinations' (Rubel 1960, pp. 149–50). According to Rubel, in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* we find a sociological explanation of this unique reality. For Marx, the Bonapartist adventure is only explicable as the 'treachery' of a class that has abandoned its 'historic' interests to the advantage of its immediate ones. As an economically-dominant class, the French bourgeoisie could go without substantial political representation. Divided into competing factions, it could however calmly devote itself to its business affairs under the shadow of the state-power. It was in its own interest, in order to preserve its power in society, that the bourgeoisie renounced having its own government. Bonapartism, the absolute supremacy of the executive over all the nation's other sources of authority, thus expressed the supreme antagonism between state and society (Rubel 1960, pp. 152–3). But following Marx's line of argument, Bonapartism becomes no longer a particular political phenomenon, expressing a circumstantial mismatch between society and the power of the ruling class, but rather a tendency of modern society. Fragmenting the

As we see, the editors made an elegant attempt to get out of this difficult question by outlining a riposte that, in reality, was less a solution than a mere excuse, since Marx's enthusiastic acceptance of sources that he never subjected to any critique – in contrast to his characteristic *modus operandi* – is clear evidence of a firmly-rooted political prejudice within him. The editors' 'answer', then, again turns us back to the heart of the question, since we must ask ourselves to what extent it is true that Marx did not dispose of sources other than those that he mentions. And if we can demonstrate – and we believe this is possible – that Marx did, indeed, have at hand other sources, favourable to the subject of his biography, this in turn raises the question of why he consciously chose to disregard them.

If we accept the explanations given by Scaron in his presentation of Marx's text, the biography of Bolivar was written at a time that an initially favourable judgement of the Liberator's record held by the leading figures of European culture

had given way to an almost universal animosity towards him. The liberals repudiated Bolivar's centralism and authoritarianism; the republicans detected crypto-republican formulas in the Liberator's proposed schemas for political organisation; the ideologues of European expansion – and for us, this is decisive – rightly detected a will to resist such penetration in the Liberator's plans for Latin-American unity.⁶

This supposed change of heart is simply recorded as fact by Scaron, but in reality there are reasons to suspect that this is only a derivative view, very likely coming from a belief that is no less questionable for its widespread acceptance: namely, that European capitalism, particularly that of England – the new hegemon in our region – was opposed to Latin-American unity, and thus to Bolivar's projects. Yet the example of Brazil shows that England at least had no reason to fear the creation of larger political units, these being able to maintain peace and domestic order, and thus to offer 'secure' markets for exports from the metropolises and for capital investment. This explains why the plan for the organisation of the Americas outlined by Bolivar met with British sympathy.⁷ Rather than a position favouring the break-up of Latin-America *on principle* – in the sense of *divide and rule*, for fear of the potential autonomy of a united Latin America – what

relation between state and society, Marx unconsciously returns to the anti-statist theme of his anti-Hegelian first political writings.

6. Marx and Engels 1972, p. 105. Scaron's considerations on Marx's text are included in his 'Introduction' and his numerous and very useful footnotes commenting on the text (pp. 105–21).

7. On the theme of British hegemony in Latin America and its attitude towards the unity of the continent, see the demystifying reflections in Chapter Three of Halperin Donghi 1993, discussed in Appendix Eight.

England really feared was that the struggle to impose order by force – and thus one without stable foundations – would ultimately be ‘much more likely to damage British interests than the maintenance of the smaller republics that had emerged spontaneously in the wake of the wars of independence’.⁸

As against this tendency to claim that there was a certain animosity towards Bolivar in the European consciousness of the time, an animosity that Marx problematically shared in, it is useful to note Hal Draper's sharp observations in an article devoted to precisely this question. Through the correspondence maintained by Marx and Engels we can reconstruct the manner in which both men faced the tasks that Dana had entrusted them with. We know, for example, that Marx (rather characteristically) began by consulting the articles that had already been published in other encyclopaedias of the time, like the *Encyclopaedia Americana*, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the *Penny Encyclopaedia*, the *Encyclopédie du XIX^e Siècle*, the *Dictionnaire de la Conversation*, and the *Brockhaus Conversations-Lexicon*, to name but a few. Looking up the entries in the texts that Marx consulted, Draper found, curiously enough, that not only were they not critical of Bolivar, but, on the contrary, that they were openly favourable towards him, which, in turn, explains Dana's upset. Moreover, one of the sources cited as a reference at the end of Marx's work, the *Memoirs of Gen. John Miller*, if certainly critical of Bolivar's political agenda, did try to maintain an impartial attitude towards the Liberator, recognising him, among others, for his ‘great service’ to the cause of independence. Sacron suggests that the fact that Marx was moved by the judgements of two declared enemies of Bolivar, Hippius and Ducoudray, and not by Miller's more measured stance, was proof that ‘his attitude towards Latin America was *prior*, not subsequent, to his reading of the works that he relied on as he drew up his biography of Bolivar’.⁹ This represents but one more argument for the position upheld by Draper and which we hope to demonstrate in this present work. Marx did not compose his diatribe *following along with* the judgement of his contemporaries, but rather *in contrast to them*. At numerous points he arbitrarily chose arguments and facts that helped back up his position, whilst disregarding others. This was quite at odds with his ‘historical-materialist’ training, and all in the service of a position sharply hostile to a personality whom he had decided to identify with his most hated foe. We must, then, echo Draper when he concludes that it was a political evaluation that led Marx to interpret Bolivar as an authoritarian and a Bonapartist, and to project, as he so often did, this political antagonism onto the whole gamut of activities – even the very personality – of the Liberator, whom he fiercely pillories throughout his extensive essay. In conclusion, it was not out of lack of

8. Halperin Donghi 1993 pp. 84–5.

9. Marx and Engels 1972, pp. 106–7.

awareness of the essential facts, nor only having at hand tendentious sources, that Marx's personal and political attitude was so fervently hostile to Bolívar; but rather, on account of his radical opposition to Bolívar's anti-democratic vision, objectives and deeds.

If we accept, even just as a working hypothesis, that it was *political* considerations that drove Marx to adopt such an attitude, so prejudiced against Bolívar, and that, moreover, this led him to misunderstand the characteristics of Latin America and the nature of its real development, it is now worth dwelling further on the manner in which two lines of Marx's thought, underlying his elaborations ever since his youth, flower even *within* this text on Bolívar. Reawakened by his negative political evaluation of the Latin-American phenomenon, both these Hegelian-rooted lines of thought implicitly re-emerge here, though the first entails a qualified commitment to Hegelianism whereas the second expresses a rejection of Hegelianism on this terrain. The reasoning that he adopts is one tied to the notion of 'non-historic peoples', whereas that he denies is the role of the state in the 'production' of civil society.¹⁰

Let us return to the theme of non-historic peoples, in order to try to clarify what perspective Marx had in mind when he picked it up again. It should be remembered that with the notion of 'non-historic peoples', Hegel was not alluding solely to a people's lack of potential or fighting strength, but an idea more fundamental to his theoretical system: that of the *rationality* of the real. Insofar as the general process of history – and within that, *human* history – was, for Hegel, immanent, not external, to the development of the real (the universal spirit), a central part of his theoretical effort was to demonstrate precisely the inherence, necessity and, therefore, the rationality of all the great figures embodying it throughout its realisation. But since this rationality is thought from the perspective of totality, the peoples with a historic destiny will be those able to uphold, and at the same time negate, the diverse set of figures deployed across a history itself able to synthesise this heritage. Thus the Hegelian notion of the historical must deny 'positivity' or, to put it another way, exteriority *qua* the rule of the arbitrary, the absurd, and ultimately, irrationality. It is precisely these elements that appear to have strongly conditioned Marx's reading of the historical events in which Bolívar played a leading role, described as the sum total of chance and unwarranted or contingent events. We see this, for example, when Marx notes that, as a consequence of the series of defeats stemming from Bolívar's manifest military weakness, 'Defection followed upon defection, and every thing seemed to be drifting to utter ruin. At this most critical moment, a new combination of

10. I owe a good part of the following reflections to the discussions I had on this work with Oscar Terán, who was so generous as to let me see his written observations and allow me to use them liberally in my own text.

fortunate accidents again changed the face of *affairs*.¹¹ There are, perhaps, few cases where we could more aptly apply to Marx the same critique that he levelled against Victor Hugo for the way in which he presented the *coup d'état* by the hated Louis Napoleon: The event itself appears in his work like a bolt from the blue.¹² This allows us to imagine that the xenophilia¹³ that imbues Marx's whole text on Bolivar is fundamentally the result of his attributing rationality to the representatives of these 'non-historic peoples', whose lack of any *class-struggle* in practice made it impossible to explain thusly the 'circumstances and relationships that made it possible for a grotesque mediocrity to play a hero's part'. We can cite, in this regard, another paragraph where he draws an stark, illustrative contrast:

Bolivar marched toward Pamplona, where he spent about 2 months in *festivals and balls*... With a treasury of about \$2,000,000, raised from the inhabitants of New Granada by *forced* contributions, and with a disposable force of about 9,000 men, the third part of whom consisted of *well-disciplined* English, Irish, Hanoverians, and other *foreigners*.¹⁴

To synthesise these points, we can say that it was by means of privileging the arbitrary, absurd and irrational aspects of the Latin-American process – as a result of his inability to see within it the presence of a class-struggle determining its real movement and thus at the basis of its logical-historical systematisation – that Marx was led again to float the idea, always in the background of his thought, of 'non-historic peoples'. But this was now understood not in an abstract sense – as some who wish to explain everything in terms of Marx's Eurocentric prejudices are inclined to believe – but rather as a thematic field within which lurked the spectre of irrationality or positivity in history. This, as is only logical, brings us back to an issue that does not only belong to Marx's thought but rather the

11. See Appendix Nine.

12. Marx 1975–2004q: 'Victor Hugo confines himself to bitter and witty invective against the responsible producer of the coup d'état. The event itself appears in his work like a bolt from the blue. He sees in it only the violent act of a single individual. He does not notice that he makes this individual great instead of little by ascribing to him a personal power of initiative unparalleled in world history. Proudhon, for his part, seeks to represent the coup d'état as the result of an antecedent historical development. Inadvertently, however, his historical construction of the coup d'état becomes a historical apologia for its hero. Thus he falls into the error of our so-called objective historians. I, on the contrary, demonstrate how the class-struggle in France created circumstances and relationships that made it possible for a grotesque mediocrity to play a hero's part.' It is thus impossible to deny the identity between the analytical approach used by the 'objective' historians of Napoleon III and that of Marx with respect to Bolivar.

13. [Apparently Aricó uses '*xenofilia*' to mean preferring those who would be seen as 'foreigners' from a Latin-American perspective, as in the subsequent block-quote – DB.]

14. See Appendix Nine; our emphases.

dominant trend of Western thought, of which he is inseparably part: the search for a historical law of social processes.

But if this is so, we are then obliged to pose ourselves a further question: why could Marx, who devoted himself with such subtlety and profundity to pulling apart other highly complex historical phenomena in search of their 'rational kernel', only see Bolivar's actions – and by extension, the Latin-American phenomenon as a whole – as submerged in irrationality? In our view, it can be argued with some merit that another factor influencing this Hegelian-like perception of the process was the second line of thought we have mentioned, namely Marx's resistance to recognising the potential of the state in the 'production' of civil society, and, by extension, of the nation itself. Marx's theoretical 'blindness', then, results from the vicious circle he fell into by thus hemming in his thought.

We should recall that the Hegelian conception of the 'the dialectic of the several national minds' recognises in each of them the potential to 'occupy only one grade, and accomplish one task in the whole deed'.¹⁵ In the past, not all peoples were up to this task, but only those who through their natural and spiritual disposition were in fit condition to create a vigorous state system, through which they were able to impose themselves on other peoples. According to Hegel, 'In the existence of a nation the substantial aim is to be a state and preserve itself as such. A nation with no state-formation (a mere nation), has, strictly speaking, no history – like the nations which existed before the rise of states and others which still exist in a condition of savagery'.¹⁶ On this basis, Hegel believed that a people indifferent to having its own state would rapidly cease to be a people at all. But just as America was, for Hegel, the continent of the future, these peoples' potential to become 'historic' lay precisely in their capacity to establish states, a capacity that, displaced until a future in which the relation between humankind and geographic space had changed, as such escaped the terrain of philosophy, but not necessarily politics. After all, if we leave to one side the point of view of 'the philosophy of universal history' from which Hegel analyses American, and we again take up his conception of the state as a centre for the 'production' of civil society and the nation, we must admit that this conception has the very great value of upholding 'the richness of the inter-relations between politics and the politico-institutional, between social subjects and the sphere of the state,

15. 'This movement is the path of liberation for the spiritual substance, the deed by which the absolute final aim of the world is realised in it, and the merely implicit mind achieves consciousness and self-consciousness. It is thus the revelation and actuality of its essential and completed essence, whereby it becomes to the outward eye a universal spirit – a world-mind. As this development is in time and in real existence, as it is a history, its several stages and steps are the national minds, each of which, as single and endued by nature with a specific character, is appointed to occupy only one grade, and accomplish one task in the whole deed.' (Hegel 1971, §549).

16. Ibid.

with its multiple articulations and complex “legitimizing” dimension’.¹⁷ And it is precisely this that Marx tends to lose sight of as he narrowly projects the immanently ‘economic’ over the totality of social relations and of history as a permanent process of transformation.

This rejection of the Hegelian conception of the state had the contradictory effect of clouding his vision of a process characterised by an *asymmetrical* relation between economics and politics, such that, unable to identify the ‘rational kernel’ at the heart of the process – the societal ‘law of movement’ – Marx reduced ‘politics’ to the purely arbitrary, unable to understand that it was precisely on this terrain that the process of state-construction was coagulating. It is worth remembering that the denial of the state’s role in the production of civil society was a constitutive principle of Marx’s thought. It is not by chance that his *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* virtually began with a challenge to paragraph 262 of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, precisely the place in which he affirmed the state’s role in the production of civil society, or, to put it another way, the production of the ‘economy’ by ‘politics’. In this paragraph, Hegel stated that ‘the actual Idea, mind, divides itself into the two ideal spheres of its concept, family and civil society . . . It is, therefore, to these ideal spheres that the actual Idea assigns the material of this its finite actuality.’ More explicitly, in paragraph 263, he used the metaphor of the nervous system with reference to the state, and definitively made clear that the state requires, as moments inherent within it, the development of the family and civil society, even when these two spheres can only become ‘actual’ within the state-framework, or rather, ‘The laws regulating family and civil society are the institutions of the rational order which glimmers in them’.¹⁸

But what does Hegel’s state consist of, institutionally speaking? It is sufficient to cite the description offered by Eric Weil, which shows just how close it was to the Bolivarian project of state-formation:

This state is a constitutional monarchy, strongly centralised in its administration, decentralised in terms of economic interests, with a corps of professional functionaries, without a state religion, absolutely sovereign in both foreign and domestic policy.¹⁹

This description coincides with that Marx made in his well-known critical reference to the French state in *Eighteenth Brumaire*:

This executive power with its enormous bureaucratic and military organisation, with its extensive and artificial state machinery, with a host of officials

17. Marramao 1982, p. 25.

18. Hegel 1967, §§262–3.

19. Weil 1970, p. 72.

numbering half a million, besides an army of another half million – this appalling parasitic body which enmeshes the body of French society like a net and chokes all its pores, sprang up in the time of the absolute monarchy, with the decay of the feudal system, which it helped to hasten...Napoleon perfected this state machinery...All revolutions perfected this machine instead of breaking it.²⁰

However, this replica of the Hegelian state that Marx saw reproduced in a higher form in the growing ‘autonomy of the executive’ characteristic of the Second Empire was understood as a linear expression of a balance of forces already established on the terrain of economics and production. Without the clearly-identifiable presence of this latter sphere, this state’s existence was only a false *form*, pure arbitrariness and authoritarianism.

Beginning from all these considerations, it is not difficult to imagine how the Bolivar constructed by Marx became the despotic, arbitrary inheritor of this political and state tradition, against which he had always fought from both theoretical and political perspectives. *Theoretical*, because his thought had originally come together through a clash with Hegel’s system: and not just any part of Hegel’s theory, but specifically his *political* theory. Thus in part sharing in the thought of the young-Hegelian milieu, but somewhat departing from it insofar as its critique was not limited to the terrain of religious alienation, the young Marx developed towards a critique of politics as the autonomous instance of civil society. Moreover, Marx’s critique of politics would be a direct emanation of his critique of political economy, and his system would ultimately exclude any positive theory and analysis of the institutional forms and functions of the political.²¹ His repeated denial to ascribe specific productivity to the state sphere derives, then, not from the ‘incomplete’ state of Marx’s global system at the moment of his death, but rather the inevitable consequences of the very means by which it was constituted. For Marx, recognising the autonomy of the political moment

20. Marx 1975–2004p, pp. 185–6.

21. ‘Every transformation can and must be, for Marx, the object of a *causal explanation* with reference to the “essence” of the mode of production. Thus the full association of the *critique of political economy* with scientific explanation of the *morphology* of capitalism. In this schema – which deduces the ‘laws of motion’ from the “core essence”, and from these laws the *fundamental* line of march of the system – political crisis is presented as a variable dependent on the crisis of production-relations, precisely to the extent that the critique of politics is considered a direct emanation of the critique of political economy. The political moment is thus posed as concentrated violence and an instrument (the complex of the apparatuses of repression) of class rule, or better...as a linear expression of a balance of forces already established on the terrain of economics and production. The absence, in Marx’s work, of any positive theory and analysis of the institutional forms and functions of the political does not then mean something missing or a “hole” in a global system, but above all the consequence of the particular means by which his system was itself “constructed”’ (Marramao 1982, p. 22).

implied giving ground to a 'pre-Feuerbachian' problematic, meaning, one that he had already overcome. The privilege accorded to the 'political' character of certain situations, which never ceased to recur in Marx's thought, represented the 'points of departure' from his system rather than an element necessarily deriving from this system itself.

In consequence, it is only natural that societies like those of Latin America, where the centre of gravity of the construction of civil society was so noticeably 'from above', would have created a grey area in Marx's thought. This allows us to explain the emphasis Marx placed in his text on Bolivar on the congenital inability of the 'Bolivarian state' to order the world of civil society in the manner suggested by Hegel:

But, like most of his countrymen, he was averse to any prolonged exertion, and his dictatorship soon proved a military anarchy, leaving the most important affairs in the hands of favourites, who squandered the finances of the country and then resorted to odious means in order to restore them.²²

This theoretical opposition was, in turn, overdetermined by the *type* of state proposed by Hegel and *realised* after the failure of the European revolutions of 1848. The identification of Bolivar with Soulouque, who had himself been compared to Napoleon III, was thus far from a throwaway remark, a sort of incarnation of his theoretical opposition to Hegel's conception of the state brought together with his political opposition to Bonapartism. Marx could not at all accept the legitimacy of a political system based on the all-encompassing reach of a dictator, nor the Hegelian-type principles on which it seemed to be grounded.

Taken without its monarch and the articulation of the whole which is the indispensable and direct concomitant of monarchy, the people is a formless mass and no longer a state. It lacks every one of those determinate characteristics – sovereignty, government, judges, magistrates, class-divisions, etc. – which are to be found only in a whole which is inwardly organised.²³

Nor could Marx accept Hegel's glowing references to the military caste as the 'universal class'. Obviously, these did not fit easily with a body of thought like Marx's, which saw socio-economic weight as the determining force in history and identified the centrality of classes as historical subjects.

This repudiation of Bolivar implied the existence of a trap that Marx was unable to escape from, and never even fully conscious of: a certain failure to understand events in their full complexity. It is no coincidence that, letting himself get carried away by his hatred for Bolivarian authoritarianism, understood as

22. See Appendix Nine.

23. Hegel 1967, §279.

an 'educative' dictatorship imposed by force on the masses – apparently not yet sufficiently mature for a democratic set-up – Marx stopped short of considering what his own method had driven him to seek out other social phenomena that he analysed: the real dynamic of the struggles between classes (or other active forces). As such, it is surprising that he did not pay any attention to sources relating to the attitudes of the various layers of Latin-American society prior to the wars of independence, the peasant- or rural rebellions against the creole élites at the head of the revolution, the weakness of these élites' base among the mass of the population, in particular among black and indigenous people, who tended to back the Spanish cause; the abolition of forced labour and servitude; the distinct characteristics of the wars of independence in the South, where the urban élites managed to maintain control of the process and stave off the threat of an open confrontation between rich and poor, as compared to Mexico, where the revolution began as a generalised rebellion by the peasantry and indigenous people; and finally, the governing class's profound fear of a process reproducing the events of Túpac Amaru's indigenous uprising or the black rebellion in Haiti. Standing between political and social disaggregation and the revolutionary desire to impose a new order ensuring individual freedom, between the need to destroy the old colonial order and the fear of this unleashing the uncontrolled fever of the masses, the Bolivarian project was not limited to authoritarianism or Bonapartism. Faced with the various options dividing the independence movement, itself having to deal with the continent's almost boundless heterogeneity, Bolívar fought to advance a project that, given the growing hostility towards the political radicalism that dominated Latin America's governing élites after 1815, would establish a system based on a central authority that could play in the new situation the same role that the ecclesiastical and military administrative apparatus in the days of the Spanish crown. To a certain degree, Bolívar was trying to repeat in Spanish America what the Portuguese monarchy had managed to do in Brazil.

This project was driven by two defining ideas, shared by a significant grouping of which Bolívar was but the most audacious and consistent exponent; two principles fundamental to the constitution of a modern state, which Marx surprisingly failed to account for even though they were part of the backdrop of his own thought on the conditions that had to come about in order for 'modern' states to exist. The first of these ideas sought the formation of a geographically extensive nationality, able to defend and promote its economic progress not only independently of Spain but also Europe's other Great Powers. The second fought for the establishment of political and social order, suggesting that the anarchy emerging from the very nature of the independence process should not undermine economic progress and subject the peoples of the continent to an even

more arbitrary and despotic tyranny than that which the revolution had fought to depose.²⁴

The credibility of patriots' dreams of monarchy having been put in question towards the end of the first revolutionary decade, swept up in the whirlwind of disaggregation and disorder, the only possible way to organise the 'nation' – though considered at a continental level – was to establish a strongly centralised authority resting on a constitutional order accepted by the local governing élites, one able to ensure the stable and legitimate representation of each of the competing social forces. The republican virtuosity of its leaders would ensure that the system did not collapse into oppressing citizens' freedoms, the very oppression that Independence was supposed to overcome.²⁵ Only such a settlement could achieve the decisive support of British capital – not that this should necessarily mean falling into a new type of subjection – on which it would inevitably have to rely in order to secure the economic recovery of a continent ruined by war.

As has often been said, the fact that this project was defeated does not in itself imply that it was utopian or did not express the social forces that actually existed on the continent. Bolivar's plans did not fail simply because they could not rely on a powerful social class that would make them its own, but because the social forces that did rally behind his project, which might have 'substituted' for such a class, lacked sufficient revolutionary energy to advance the process to such a

24. It is very telling that Marx did not give account for the Bolivarian proposal for a great Andean nation able to unify the various regions into a single political structure, with a strongly centralised authority, when it is well-known that his thinking on this question was dominated by the idea of geographical extent as a condition for states' potential existence. Although, as we have highlighted, his conception of the national question was developed over the years, certain elements persisted, one among them the idea that small nations were not able to establish any real political independence in modern conditions (see Bloom 1941). An enemy of all separatisms and any type of particularism, Marx was strongly inclined to recognising the legitimacy of the national struggles waged by the larger countries; yet in the concrete example of Gran Colombia, he returned to his undervaluing of the Bolivarian struggle, considering only its imperial caprice and not its effort to prevent the Balkanisation of America.

25. The republican virtuosity advocated by Bolivar bore surprising resemblance to the conception upheld by Lenin (for example) with regard to the revolutionary party's leadership's effort to maintain its internal democracy in conditions of illegality. But it also resembled Lenin's proposal to widen the ruling group of the CPSU in response to the new conditions the Party faced once it had taken power, incorporating into its ranks some one hundred workers who through their class 'virtuosity' could counteract the dangerous tendency towards the bureaucratisation of the state and the Party that he had detected. On this point, see Lenin 1980, pp. 90sq. Although this similarity derives from the situations that they faced rather than an identity of political opinion, it is interesting to see how their responses to the problems posed by the process of transformation 'from above' were almost always the same, conspicuously sharing a common appeal to the repressive power of the state and confidence in the exceptional virtues of the core revolutionary leadership.

point that any return to the prior situation became impossible. In other words, it could not be realised because of the weaknesses internal to the forces that could have brought it into being, along with their deep fear of the destructive, violent power of the masses. The traumatic memory of the colonial-era rebellions and the conservative and royalist reaction among the creole élites on account of the threat posed by the masses, 'liable to being het up by any demagogue and hurled into battle with the centres of order, culture and finance' eroded the fragile Jacobinism that characterised even the most radical representatives of the revolutionary movement. The prospect that the success of the revolutionary new order would depend on deepened popular mobilisation was feared 'not only by conservative-minded individuals, but also by many of liberal inspiration, like Bolívar, who saw the masses as having more capacity for destruction than construction'.²⁶ But if these were the complex and dangerous alternatives with which the independence movement was faced, then the Bonapartist and authoritarian *form* of the Bolivarian project did not express, as Marx had deduced, the personal characteristics of an individual. Rather, it expressed the weakness of a particular social group, one that was advanced but which, in an international and continental context chiefly defined by the rise of counter-revolution, could only envisage the construction of a major modern nation if it was founded on a strong state, with its social base among a certain layer of professionals and intellectuals and an army ready to suppress the constant subversive efforts of the mass of the population. As such, we can conclude that, betraying his own essential approach to analysing social processes, Marx identified with Bolívar as an individual all that he had failed to analyse in Latin-American reality as a whole, namely the social forces that brought about its apogee and subsequent fall into decadence. In an idealist characterisation of events, he substituted the failings of an anti-hero for the dynamics of the 'real movement'.

Marx was often open to analysis of the social phenomena of the European world, as the examples of new, previously untested forces of transformation contributed to his effort at a totalising understanding of the dynamics of world-capitalism. Analysing countries like Ireland, Spain, Russia or Turkey, he constantly discovered such forces, which he saw as so rich in vitality that they could generate new plebeian and popular revolutions, the whole of society revolutionised, as in the French Revolution. To put it another way, in each of them he found the seeds of a new '1789'. And it was precisely this that he could not envisage in Latin America. The absence of any 'national-popular' will – characteristic of the creole élites leading the independence-process – set down limits to its 'visibility' in Marx's eyes. This was something that he proved unable to overcome, and

26. Di Tella 1968, p. 181.

paradoxically resolved by means of mere denial. The weakness of the Latin-American social and political élites and the lack of even hints of the mass of the people playing an autonomous role necessarily led him to deny any legitimacy to a social process in which he saw nothing but its arbitrary and authoritarian elements. From a moral point of view he could justify and even defend it; but from a theoretical and political perspective he denied that it had any creative historical role. So when, in very specific circumstances, he had to analyse an exceptional historical figure, imbued with all the multiplicity of determinations of the contradictory Latin-American process, he declined to deploy his formidable analytical capabilities for a study of a revolution so narrowly defined by developments 'from above'.

If we take as a starting point all these elements that we have tried to incorporate into our analysis – one which, in present circumstances, is intended less as an attempt to resolve the question than as a perspective to be researched – we can better pose the question of why the socialist movement was blind to the reality of our continent for several decades. Latin-American singularity escaped comprehension by this movement not because of 'Eurocentrism', but precisely because it was singular. The status of the continent's nation-states, neither central nor peripheral; the fact that they had come about by virtue of a process of 'passive revolution', to define it in Gramscian terms; the essentially *statist* character of their formation as nations; and the rapid destruction or isolation of those processes coloured by strong mass mobilisation – these were all factors that contributed to pushing Latin America away from the classic dichotomy between Europe and Asia, such as has characterised the European intellectual outlook ever since the Enlightenment.

It is for this reason that it is weak, limiting and false to explain Marx's paradoxical evasion of Latin-American reality in terms of some supposed 'Eurocentrism'. The confusionist effect of the populist phenomena characterising our continent's twentieth-century history has curiously led to the identification of 'Eurocentrism' with hostility to Bonapartism and authoritarianism in all its forms. The result has been an ever-worse fragmentation of left-wing thought, divided between accepting authoritarianism as an inevitable cost of any process of mass democratisation, or else seeing élitist liberalism as the only possible means of bringing about a new society, even at the cost of losing mass support. Accepting the idea that Marx was 'Eurocentric' – this being taken as the reason for his blindness towards Latin America – effectively implies questioning the seam of democratic, national, mass politics that were, in fact, inseparable from Marx's thought. Even though it is undeniable that the process of constituting Latin America's nation-states was carried out largely on the backs of the mass of the population, against their will, to question the view held so dear by the Second International (and not

only them) as to the *in nuce* progressive character of the development of the productive forces and state-formation, essentially means encountering afresh Marxism's mass, democratic core. This is to introduce a new starting point, a new perspective 'from below' of historical processes, in which consideration of the masses, their movements of composition and fragmentation, the forms in which they express themselves, their links with political or intellectual élites, their internal homogeneity, their myths and values, their degree of subordination or autonomy, must be upheld as the only true Marxist criterion. Only in this way is it possible to avoid the constant oscillation between 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity' that characterises today's debates over Marxist historiography and political theory, unable to account for the new because they are so tied up with the old. Thus to problematise the reasons why Marx resisted incorporating into his thought the examples of the Latin-American social formations becoming nation-states is not a merely historiographical question, nor an empty exercise in 'Marxology'. Rather, it is but one more of the many means of addressing Marxism that we can and must use in order to put it to the test. Rejecting the suggestion that Marx's supposed 'Eurocentrism' is the most valid explanation for his paradoxical blindness, instead we have to venture down as-yet unknown paths that his genius uncovered for the first time, but which the conversion of his ideas into a 'system' buried under elaborate interpretative schemas. The crisis of a way of thinking that attempted to be both totalising and self-sufficient at the same time today allows us to uncover these 'lost paths' of Marx's thought. In one way or another, this will have the contradictory effect of showing us the limits of his method's validity, as well as bringing to the surface the seams running through his thought that have long been hidden by the socialist tradition. Questioning such an interpretative tradition, we have managed to touch on certain thematic threads where the points of departure from Marx's system appear to offer greater possibilities for pursuing a line of investigation closer to Marx's own spirit. And, as such, the result that has been achieved – even if, perhaps, overly reliant on what is not said rather than Marx's explicit statements – may contribute in some measure to revealing to us anew the heterodoxy of his thought: a body of thought that the socialist movement, for all its extraordinary historical magnitude, has insisted on seeing only at the level of incontrovertible truth.

Demonstrating the presence of two 'souls' within Marxism, the libertarian and the Hegelian, and emphasising the need to privilege the former over the latter, we can restore to Marxism its character as a revolutionary, critical theory, full of the disruptive potential that Marx's thought always entailed. The fact that at the present moment, amidst the crisis of authoritarian and bureaucratic conceptions of Marxism, it is experiencing a grave crisis as a state-philosophy, at the same

time as its democratic, anti-authoritarian undercurrent is again emerging with such force as to demand a total reordering of theory and political practice, just goes to show the vitality of a doctrine still capable of sustaining a productive engagement with contemporary reality and culture.

Mexico City,
12 March 1980

Appendix One

Rosa Luxemburg and the 'Crisis' of Marxism

The dialectical connection that Rosa Luxemburg established between Marxism and the processes by which social movements are brought about, developed or impeded is founded on a principle that she does not seem to clearly explain in her reasoning. Nonetheless, it can be deduced from her wider conception of the relationship between revolutionary theory and the workers' movement. Such a principle recognises that the form Marxism takes as revolutionary theory is the result of its connection with the real revolutionary movement; to put it another way, closer to her own meaning, it can be said that it is the theoretical expression (with all the ambiguity that word entails) of the very process of constitution of the real revolutionary movement. Theoretical forms and the morphology of the movement or the class do not 'express one another', but rather constitute elements or perspectives for overturning the actually-existing society. The Marxist theory of class-struggle is itself class-struggle, or, as Karl Korsch would say, 'Marx's "proletarian" dialectic as just that form in which the revolutionary class movement of the proletariat finds its appropriate theoretical expression'. Theory, then, while at certain moments and in particular circumstances appearing to be indispensable to providing social upheavals a revolutionary orientation as well as a site for the revolutionary coherence of its political practice to be tested, it is in fact nothing but a means of elaborating theoretically what the real, historical movement of the proletarian class has brought about in practice.

The materialist science of Marx, in its role as the critical and revolutionary science of the proletariat, can by no means constitute a closed theoretical system. This is not because Marx did not have enough time to finish it, but because the very idea of 'closing' (and of a 'system') is foreign to the struggle of the proletarian class and thus to Marx's scientific agenda. This was, rather, in Rosa Luxemburg's words, 'a method of investigation, as a few inspired leading thoughts, which offer us glimpses into the entirely new world, which open us to endless perspectives of independent activity, which wing our spirit for bold flights into unexplored regions'.

In consequence, just as each stage of social transformation (the specific morphology of composition and recomposition of the working class in a capitalist mode of production, subject to an incessant process of reproduction and transformation) makes its own human material, the practice of the class-struggle sets the field for the theoretical needs of the movement and the possibility of its resolution. This explains why the process of taking up and developing this or that Marxian perspective takes place insofar as the movement reaches new and different stages or 'periods' and is thus faced with novel practical questions. As such, one should be wary of the theoretician's sin of believing in the possibility of confronting (and resolving) given questions of Marxist theory without these *actually* having brought into play, one way or another, by social struggles themselves. '[I]n the romantic period of struggles', Gramsci writes in analysing precisely this article by Luxemburg:

the period of popular *Sturm und Drang*, all interest is focussed on the most immediate weapons and on tactical problems in the political field and on minor cultural problems in the philosophical field. But from the moment in which a subaltern group becomes really autonomous and hegemonic, thus bringing into being a new form of State, we experience the concrete birth of a need to construct a new intellectual and moral order, that is, a new type of state, and hence the need to develop more universal concepts and more refined and decisive ideological weapons.¹

To the economico-corporate phase, to the phase of struggle for hegemony in civil society and to the phase of State power there correspond specific intellectual activities which cannot be arbitrarily improvised or anticipated. In the phase of struggle for hegemony it is the science of politics which is developed: in the State phase all the superstructures must be developed, if one is not to risk the dissolution of the State.²

1. Gramsci 1971, pp. 387–8.

2. Gramsci 1971, p. 440.

The *form* of theory, then, is related to the overall terms of class-struggle, even though under capitalism it appears in an *autonomous* form on account of the accentuated social division of labour, the formalisation of the appropriation of labour-power and the universalisation (dominion) of the exchange-value form. The theoretical core of Marxism lies in its specific character as a scientific analysis of capitalist society with a view to its revolutionary transformation. This end goal is not derived from some ethical position, introduced to the scientific discourse from the outside, but rather is an expression of the process's own mode of functioning, grasped in its full complexity. The ever-present possibility of the conversion of theory into a *reflection* of social struggles or into the *philosophy* of the alternative model has effects that, while varied, do share in subordinating the theoretical forms of the social movement to the modalities and timing of developing capitalist crisis. Only with constant recognition of its real foundation – the working class and the masses – can theory avoid falling into the trap of subordination to conjunctural episodes and maintain an analytical strength allowing it to reconstruct in theory the actual development of the value-form and the concrete modalities of its antagonistic relationship with the development of the productive forces. After all, though it is true that the starting point of Marxist theory is the objective composition of the productive forces, it must always be remembered that this is itself a consequence of the dynamic relation between class-struggle and development. As such, the identification of the real bearers of the process should not lead to a crystallisation of theoretical forms and their conversion into a totalising philosophy of the world and mankind (dialectical materialism, or *Diamat*) but rather recognition of the need for their constant development and enrichment, a process that appears in theory as its 'crisis'. Within the current recomposition of theory, the current attempt to dilate the analytical capacity of Marx's scientific project, there lies the possibility of grasping in the real development of class-struggle the elements that point to the transformation of the whole process. The restoration by theory of the centrality of the theme of contradiction in Marx's analysis, no longer seen as the breaking apart of economic mechanisms or the spontaneous emergence of mass insubordination, allows us to establish a new type of connection between theory and politics that 'does not relegate the former to a passive and subordinate role (registering and confirming the levels reached by each wave of the real class-struggle) but rather guarantees its critical-scientific (emancipatory) and innovative content'.³ As such, analysis of the development of the productive forces is freed from any kind of economistic determinism (it may be termed reductionism, economism, or theoreticism, and so on) and, instead, becomes a theoretical

3. Marramao 1981, p. 27.

form of the process of constructing contradiction politically; or, to put it another way, constructing the historic bloc that can replace capitalist society.

Such a recomposition of theory could allow it to capture what is 'new' in the present situation; what was effectively excluded from theory as it was historically constituted; and what social struggles have brought to the surface amidst the crises of capitalism and actually-existing socialism. We refer here to the emergence of a new concept of productivity, an alternative to that of capitalism (and of actually-existing socialism, too – after all, do not both of them draw the same mystificatory equation between productive labour and labour that produces surplus-value?) and which contains the seed of a *qualitatively* different vision of *development*, understood as the necessary material precondition for progress towards a new civilisation, based on the full, conscious leadership of society by the productive labour-force.⁴

For this reason, starting from the interpretative principle essential to Marx's analysis – which does not point to some 'working-class consciousness' of permanent structures, but rather to recognition of the irreducibility of contradiction and the specificity of its historical forms – means always keeping in mind the fact that even insofar as theory is a *constitutive* element of the social and historical totality, it is in reality and most fundamentally *part* of this totality, the theoretical form of its development. To *ontologically* separate the historical process from the theoretical one (a distinction only valid from the limited and transitory perspective of *analysis*) implies falling back into attributing the same kind of autonomy to value-forms that Marx wanted to escape from in his *Theses on Feuerbach* and fundamentally so in *Capital*.

Analysing the theme of the 'crisis of Marxism' from a perspective such as that we are here suggesting, that is to say in terms of the possibility and necessity of reconquering the political and intellectual unity between science and the working class (the masses) does not, however, mean subsuming theory to political practice as it already exists, but rather refounding theory as part of the very process of political recomposition. The 'crisis of Marxism', then, implies not the crisis of a paradigm as much as the crisis of a type of political activity based on accepting the separation between 'economics' and 'politics', the dichotomy between 'politics' and 'the social' and – why not add – between 'theory' and 'practice'. As Del Parco argues, the crisis of Marxism expresses

the moment of rupture, the moment in which the exploited classes ask themselves questions about their historical experiences... It is a question of the *impossibility* of a certain theory and practice. But the possibility of establishing this impossibility... is not the result of some theoretical illumination, but

4. Ibid.

rather the arduous labour of the old revolutionary mole that has never ceased to burrow through all theory, all organisation... The reasoning that – in the name of Marxism – became an instrument of domination, and not of human liberation, has now been unsettled.⁵

To revisit the current mode of functioning of the value-form, as Marx did in his day; to analyse the combination of structures and institutions by which capitalism appropriates labour-power, devalorising it and walling it in as a commodity; to reflect on the unprecedented expansion of the field of battle in which the contradictions of modern society operate – to do all this is to establish ourselves in the very place where the possibility of crisis and the development of class consciousness are germinating. But to work in such a way is also to work 'within Marx', taking forward a scientific programme that – insofar as it accounts for the essential determinations of a whole historical epoch, being the theoretical form of a movement that is still yet to bury it – demonstrates that same inexhaustible richness referred to by Rosa Luxemburg.

5. Del Barco 1979, p. 13.

Appendix Two

Hegel and Latin America

Hegel and America (I)

An infinite volume of ink has been spilt on the much-debated theme of how the European cultural milieu perceived and addressed the unique 'nature' of America. One of the most recent books is that of Michele Duchet, *Antropología e historia en el siglo de las luces*.¹ But Antonello Gerbi's *La disputa del Nuevo Mondo* also remains a must-read work on the topic, a superb, inexhaustible collection of information.² The more specific discussion of the relationship of Hegel's thought to America appears in its section 6.14, 'Hegel y sus contemporáneos'.³ According to Gerbi, for a long time those who denigrated the new continent could find some succour in the words of the German philosopher:

Hegel, impressed by the sight of the rapid adolescence of the North-American republic and the repeated, victorious revolutionary explosions in Spanish America, but unsure of how he could integrate the continent into his largely Eurocentric dialectical triads, did not deny the peoples of America their glorious anointment as the bearers of youth, to which the future belonged, but he branded the American continent itself with the charge of immaturity.⁴

1. Duchet 1975, see especially pp. 169–96.

2. Gerbi 1960.

3. Gerbi 1960, pp. 297–409.

4. Gerbi 1960, p. 385.

For Gerbi, the haughty judgementalism of Hegel's pronouncements regarding the American continent was the inevitable result of his theoretical system. His decision to dismiss the New World was not a matter of making a deliberate and conscious choice,

but in the eyes of a philosopher who conceived the development of the Spirit, or indeed the Absolute, in the historically-conditioned terms of the Orient, of Greece, Rome and Christianity, the Old World certainly had more reality to it, more consistency, more life, to the vast and exotic regions that came along in the fifteenth century to disrupt this perfect, organic line of development. For Hegel, integrating America into his system would have meant shattering his whole historical-dialectical construct, thus revealing its fragility, artificiality, rigidity and incapacity to adapt to and understand new realities. America, of huge and undeniable presence, *naïve et péremptoire*,⁵ would have uncovered and betrayed one of the weak points of his system. To fit into the triad-schema the five parts of the world would have to be cut down to three, like it or not, just as Hegel had reduced from five to three the number of senses and traditional number of art forms.⁶

Even Gerbi himself, however, includes in a footnote some of the reflections of Ortega y Gasset, which adhere more closely to Hegel's framework and its real intention than does his own sour and superficial critique, too narrowly abiding by the dubious logical approach of presenting debatable facts and then rationalising them. According to the Spanish philosopher, the threats America posed to Hegel's system, and his consequent dismissal of that continent, derive from his conception of reality as history and of history as the past. Since America had no 'history', nor could Hegel see in it any 'reality'.⁷ If, for Hegel, universal history is the progressive objectivation of the Spirit in the state – and this presupposes the nation, the objective realisation of the national spirit – only in the act of becoming nations (and thus states) could America register a notch on the scale of universal history. Only in the future would America cease to be mere existence [*Realität*] and become necessary and thus effectively real [*Wirklichkeit*], because only when 'reality has completed its formative process' can it find its place as one of the forms of 'the thought of the world', as he wrote in the 'Preface' to the *Philosophy of Right*. One cannot deny the existence of an unresolved tension within Hegel, between the transformation of totality through an immanent process by which reason is progressively realised – which presupposes a linear schema of universal history – and, conversely, the presence of stages, such as the

5. [In French in the original – DB.]

6. Gerbi 1960, p. 406.

7. Ortega y Gasset 1972, pp. 218sq.

Orient or the New World, that have definitively lost their place on the dialectical scale or else never found it to begin with. Hegel resolved this tension by expelling the Oriental world from history, on account of its static or immutable character, and not including America at all, on account of its immaturity. There is only evolution, or, to put it another way, 'history', with the coming of the Spirit, and this can only happen by means of the state: 'History, we have seen, does not begin until spiritual man enters the scene; and as such, the Spirit, conscious of itself, with a very unrefined consciousness of itself, but alert nonetheless. The symptom of this, for Hegel, is the existence of a state'.⁸ Therefore, life prior to the existence of the state is irrational, and thus only pre-history.

But unlike with the Oriental world, Hegel did not pass judgement on America's future prospects of achieving the state-form. As such, rather than *dismissing* America, he made a *wager* on its future. It would only be correct to speak of the former if one believed – making a blatant error – that for Hegel the development of human history could arrive at some final outcome. As Engels noted, history according to Hegel 'could never reach its definitive culmination in some perfect ideal state of mankind', which could only exist in the imagination. Just as with the Slavic peoples, Hegel allowed for the possibility that America could one day take its place among the forms adopted by reason. It is worth recalling that this Hegelian comparison between the Slavic and American worlds, already recognised in his own time by Goethe and De Tocqueville, was rehearsed time and again by the European intellectual milieu disillusioned in the wake of the defeat of 1848. This was not only true among Russian thinkers (Herzen, for instance, was convinced that America along with Russia were the nations of the future) but also, years later, amongst the Bolsheviks themselves.

Hegel and America (II)

We should recall that for Hegel a state, in the true sense of the word, could only exist 'after a distinction of classes has arisen, when wealth and poverty become extreme, and when such a condition of things presents itself that a large portion of the people can no longer satisfy its necessities in the way in which it has been accustomed so to do'.⁹ While there still existed free territory and opportunities for further colonisation, the tensions of modern society – and with them, the constitution of the state – could be held off to the future.

Only when, as in Europe, the direct increase of agriculturists is checked, will the inhabitants, instead of pressing outwards to occupy the fields, press

8. Ortega y Gasset 1972, p. 22.

9. Hegel 1991, pp. 85–6.

inwards upon each other – pursuing town occupations, and trading with their fellow-citizens; and so form a compact system of civil society, and require an organized state.¹⁰

Once the untamed frontier had been swallowed up and the ‘empty’ spaces occupied, society could concentrate on itself, forming a compact civil-society and thus necessarily requiring a state.

Ortega y Gasset believed – and with good reason – that behind these statements, there can be found a fundamental law of history that Hegel nonetheless never really fleshed out. If history is always the Spirit’s discovery of itself, and if, for this to occur, it is necessary that men not be faced with large, free spaces, history or the spiritualisation of the universe is a function of population density. ‘Subjected to pressure, humanity begins to exude spirituality and the historical adventure proper begins. Only with difficulties in “natural” life, which we can measure in terms of having comfortable territorial space, does the cultural process take flight.’¹¹ As such, for Hegel space is more a geographic category than a historical one.

Even when Ortega y Gasset positively appraises the ‘general theory’ that he discovers underlying Hegel’s considerations on the New World, he tends to express the view that it was his blindness to the future that led Hegel to disregard the actual substance of the North-American state and disqualify it on the grounds that it was still ‘a state in formation’. However, even within Hegel’s own reasoning, the wager on America’s future had a rational foundation, as he explained its existence with relation to the problems engendered by population and industrial expansion in Europe. He writes,

North America will be comparable with Europe only after the immeasurable space which that country presents to its inhabitants shall have been occupied, and the members of the political body shall have begun to be pressed back on each other.¹²

It is interesting to note that in Hegel there co-existed two radically different perspectives on population-growth, a positive thing in the New World since it provided the conditions for the organised state, whereas in the Old World it was a negative factor, not simply the result of its natural growth but rather a negative

10. Hegel 1991, p. 86. [The Spanish-language translation of these lines quoted by Aricó does not explicitly refer to Europe, its sentence structure rather idiosyncratic in character – DB.]

11. Ortega y Gasset 1972, pp. 31–3.

12. Hegel 1991, p. 86. [The Spanish-language translation quoted by Aricó reads ‘Today the surplus from the European states can still find refuge in America, but when this ceases, the mass of people there will be hemmed in and pressed back on each other – DB.]

effect of the dialectics of civil society. In Paragraph 243 of his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel demonstrated how the progress of industry and population growth provoked, on the one hand, an increased accumulation of wealth, whereas 'The other side is the subdivision and restriction of particular jobs. This results in the dependence and distress of the class tied to work of that sort, and these again entail inability to feel and enjoy the broader freedoms and especially the intellectual benefits of civil society.'¹³ As such, even amidst the excess of wealth, civil society would not be wealthy enough, since 'its own resources are insufficient to check excessive poverty and the creation of a penurious rabble.'¹⁴ It is precisely this rise of overpopulation – not the result of population-growth but rather 'the appearance of a number of people who cannot secure the satisfaction of their needs by their own labour once production rises above the requirements of consumers' – that forces civil society to export its surplus-population. By means of colonisation, advanced civil society 'supplies to a part of its population a return to life on the family basis in a new land and so also supplies itself with a new demand and field for its industry'.¹⁵ Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* thus outlined a theory of imperialism to some degree comparable to that formulated many years later by Hobson and Rosa Luxemburg, America ceasing to be some 'land of desire for all those who are weary of the historical lumber-room of old Europe', but rather becoming one of the conditions for Europe's survival. And it is curious indeed to note the sloppiness with which a student of Hegel as diligent as Marx read these sublime paragraphs. It is possible that the reason for his failure to pay them proper attention lies in the virulent animosity with which the radical currents of the 1840s, and particularly Marx and Engels, contemplated a work which for them expressed the old Hegel's conciliation with the Prussian conservative state. Nowadays, however, it is valued precisely because of its profound critique of the state and society. On this theme – a record already put straight by scholars such as Hermann Heller¹⁶ – see the interesting work of Alberto O. Hirschman.¹⁷

13. Hegel 1967, §243.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Heller 1971, pp. 125–138.

17. Hirschman 1976.

Appendix Three

Marx and the Prospects of Russian Society

In 1877, Yuly Galaktionovich Zhukovsky (1822–1907), an economist belonging to the *Sovremennik* ['The Contemporary'] group – whose publication was a rallying point for the most advanced layer of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia between 1836 and 1866 – published an article in the liberal *Vestnik Evropy* ['Herald of Europe'] entitled 'Marx and his Book on Capital'¹ in which he fiercely polemicised against *Capital* and against Marxist theories in general. The article provoked many responses, among them that of the Narodnik writer Nikolai Konstantinovich Mikhailovsky (1842–1904) who determined to assume Marx's defence in the columns of the progressive magazine *Otechestvennye Zapiski* ['Annals of the Fatherland'] with an essay under the heading 'Karl Marx before the Tribunal of Mr. Zhukovsky'.² His article, however, itself included a number of distortions of Marx's thought, above all the supposed 'inevitability' in *all* historical environments of a process of disaggregation of economies still based on the unity of the producers with their means of production, as discussed by Marx in relation to Western-European countries. Intending to rectify these misrepresentations of his thought, late that same year Marx wrote a French-language letter addressed to the magazine's editors, but apparently never sent it. Engels, discovering this letter amongst Marx's papers, sent a copy of it to Vera Zasulich in

1. *Vestnik Evropy*, Issue 9 of 1877.

2. *Otechestvennye Zapiski*, Issue 10 of 1877.

1884, just at the moment she had ceased to be a Narodnik and – together with Plekhanov, Axelrod and other Russian revolutionaries – founded the Marxist ‘Emancipation of Labour’ group. Plekhanov’s group decided that it was best not to publish it; however, according to Engels’s 1894 Afterword to his own essay ‘On Social Relations in Russia’, there was a clandestine circulation of French-language copies of the letter within Russia. Not long afterwards, in 1886 the organ of the revolutionary Narodniks in exile, *Vestnik Narodnoi Voli* [‘Herald of the People’s Will’] published it in Russia. Two years later, in 1888, it was again published in Russian, this time by the legal magazine *Yuridichevski Vestnik* [‘Judicial Herald’], of Narodnik leanings. For his part, Nikolai Frantsevich Danielson published a full version of the letter as an appendix to the French version of his book on the Russian economy,³ as to bring it to Western readers’ attention, though it was simultaneously published by the journal *Le mouvement socialiste*.⁴ It is notable, then, that neither Russian nor Western Marxists (except the French) made any effort to publish a document of such importance. Indeed, in the polemics of the 1890s, Narodnik theorists like Mikhailovsky, Danielson, Vorontsov and others frequently used Marx’s letter to counterpose his positions to those of the Russian Marxists. See, in particular, the invocation of this document by Mikhailovsky and the reply by the young Lenin in his 1894 book *What the ‘Friends of the People’ Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats*. In terms of their Spanish-language publication, this letter as well as the sum total of Marx and Engels’s texts on Russia’s *original* path have been compiled in the *Escritos sobre Rusia* that the Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente has begun to publish.⁵ However, we can still count among the best expositions of this debate Fernando Claudín’s introduction to his edition of Lenin’s economic writings.⁶ On the difference between Marx’s views on the ‘Russian question’ and those of Engels, see the recent publication of their correspondence with Danielson.⁷

3. Danielson 1902, pp. 507–9.

4. *Le mouvement socialiste*, 24 May 1902, pp. 968sq.

5. Marx and Engels 1980b.

6. Claudín 1974.

7. Marx, Engels, Danielson et al. 1980.

Appendix Four

Marx's Shift of Attention Towards Agrarian Communities

There is good reason to suggest that Marx's shift of attention towards pre-capitalist societies is but a particular case of a more general phenomenon affecting the European intellectual scene in the final third of the nineteenth century. The process of capitalism's expansion into the colonial world and the backward regions of southern and south-eastern Europe sparked the breakdown of whole societies and the emergence of new problems that needed to be addressed. It is no coincidence that the exhumation of Haxthausen via Maurer and the discovery that the rural community based on collective land-possession was the primitive form of society from Ireland to India – as Engels made clear in his corrective note to the 1888 English edition of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* – took place at the same time as Russia 'began to move' and great struggles broke out in various political forms across large areas of rural Europe and Asia. Marx and Engels drew significantly on the scientific investigations of the time, not only to verify their own theory of society against a new backdrop, but also to consider the political fruitfulness of such investigations. In our understanding, and particularly if we look at Marx's case, his growing interest in the theory and history of the rural commune implied an opening towards subaltern peoples, one with unforeseeable effects on Marxist theory itself, at least at the time. From this perspective, the fact that the Marxism of the Second International – with, to some degree, the exception of the Austro-Marxist current and 'Russian' Marxism – chose to

dodge this question, of such fundamental importance to Marx, entailed malign consequences for the study of problems as significant as the peasant-question and the national and colonial question, thus gravely affecting even the Marxist theory of society and the state. The fact that Marx's studies concerned problematics as distinct as those of Morgan – focused on kinship – and those of Kovalevsky – essentially interested in analysing the nature of the primitive community and its survivals in modern societies – allowed, via Engels's recasting of his points on Morgan, for what was of only incidental importance in Marx to be misconstrued as the essentials of his work. Of his studies from the 1870s and early 1880s, the Marxist tradition only assimilated those devoted to Morgan, burying those concerning Kovalevsky and the rural community. Engels's interpretation of Morgan – based on Marx's notebooks and put into print with his *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* – meant the impoverishment of studies on the history and theory of society by the socialists and Marxists of the second and Third Internationals, as has been highlighted in the interesting contribution of Lawrence Krader.¹

To return to the point raised at the beginning of this appendix, we can say that Marx's 1870s change of perspective was motivated by the need to resolve theoretical problems that arose in the process of finishing the later volumes of *Capital*, but also for more narrowly political reasons: the social conditions of Russia and the problems this entailed for the triumph of a revolution now considered imminent. Given Marx's breadth of focus and analytical capacity, his reading of Maurer, Kovalevsky, Morgan, Tylor, Lubbock, Phear, Maine and of Russian economists and sociologists allowed him to take on board the science of the time, finding within it the elements necessary to fully develop his theoretical critique. In this same period, moreover, he took meticulous notes on Bakunin's *Statism and Anarchy*, with reference to the question of the state. For Marx, the emancipation of the serfs indicated that the cements of Tsarist autocracy were beginning to break apart, a disaggregation that was inevitably bound to intensify. But the spread of peasant-rebellions and the growth of the Narodnik movement, pushing Russia to the edge of its own '1789', posed with unusual force a problem that Russian intellectuals had long since been confronting, thus bringing about the two great – and complementary – ideological and political movements of Westernism and Slavophilism. Westernisers and Slavophiles discussed the ultimate destiny of their country with a romantic passion typical of Russian debates. Would it be condemned to reproducing the barbaric forms of bourgeois exploitation characteristic of post-1848 Europe, or would awareness of the social ills of the advanced countries allow the backward countries to avoid repeating

1. Krader 1982.

them? Was the weakness of Russian capitalism a good or bad thing? Would the existence of communal forms, so deeply rooted in the countryside, allow for an original path to socialism able to bypass the misery of capitalism, or was this not possible? What role could or should the rural commune play in the transition to an egalitarian society? In the 1870s, all these questions – up till then answered in the negative in Marx and Engels's polemics with Herzen, Bakunin and Tkachov – took a different turn, with a difference of criteria emerging between the two theorists of socialism, albeit in a hidden (or better, non-explicit) form. While Engels believed that the rural commune could ease the path to communism – thus allowing Russia to avoid any capitalist phase – *only on condition* that the anti-feudal peasant-revolution in Russia was accompanied by a proletarian revolution in Western Europe, Marx attempted to give a rather different response, or at least to give a different stress in his analysis. In his 1875 polemic against Tkachov 'On Social Relations in Russia', Engels principally tends to see the ever-greater development of capitalism in Russia, inexorably disaggregating the communal property-relations of the countryside. Russia achieving socialism on the basis of the *obschina* was only a circumstantial and chance-possibility, conditional on a prior, successful revolution in the West. Still in Marx's own lifetime, such a position was reaffirmed, albeit more ambiguously, in the 1882 preface to the second Russian edition of *Capital*, which although signed by both men was very possibly composed by Engels alone. There are various reasons to advance this hypothesis, though the most important remains the evident contrast between this position and Marx's statements in his draft reply to Vera Zasulich, written one year previously. In the brief letter with which he finally did attempt to satisfy his correspondent's vital questions, Marx accepted that the rural commune could be transformed, *under certain conditions*, into the foundation of Russia's social regeneration. However, in his case the conditions appear to have been directly linked to the life of the rural commune *itself*, 'from the moment it is placed in normal conditions, that is to say, as soon as the burdens weighing on it are removed'. It is very likely that Marx would have included the revolution in the West as one of the factors contributing to this, but the fact remains that in his drafts the emphasis is on revolution within Russia, as the decisive, fundamental factor in taking advantage of what he considered a rather exceptional historical opportunity.

To save the Russian commune, a Russian revolution is needed. For that matter, the holders of political and social power are doing their very best to prepare the masses for just such a disaster... At the same time as the commune is bled dry and tortured, its land rendered barren and poor, the literary lackeys of the "new pillars of society" ironically depict the wounds inflicted on it as so many symptoms of its spontaneous decrepitude. They allege that it is dying

a natural death and they would be doing a good job by shortening its agony. As far as this is concerned, it is no longer a matter of solving a problem; it is simply a matter of beating an enemy. To save the Russian commune, a Russian revolution is needed. For that matter, the government and the “new pillars of society” are doing their best to prepare the masses for just such a disaster. If revolution comes at the opportune moment, if it concentrates all its forces so as to allow the rural commune full scope, the latter will soon develop as an element of regeneration in Russian society and an element of superiority over the countries enslaved by the capitalist system.²

But, then, we might ask ourselves: to what extent did Engels – in his 1875 polemic with Tkachov and his 1894 Afterword to it, or, indeed, his letters to Danielson – not fall into precisely that position Marx criticised? When Engels wrote to Danielson on 17 October 1893 that “There is no great historical evil without a compensating historical progress. Only the *modus operandi* is changed. *Que les destinées s’accomplissent!* [Only the mode of operation is changed. Let fate be accomplished.]”,³ was he not portraying in a positive light the commune being put out of its misery and the acceleration of capitalist development’s inevitable advance? Reading Marx’s drafts and comparing them to these texts by Engels is reason enough to establish that we are here faced with two different positions. However, we should be clear that these differences were never clearly defined and that the Russian Narodniks considered both men their theoretical support. When the editors of *Narodnaya Volya* published the Preface to the second Russian edition of the *Manifesto* in their newspaper, they added a commentary that maintained that this text fully conformed ‘to one of the fundamental theses of Narodism, confirmed in the investigations of scholars of such elevated stature as Marx and Engels’.⁴

The fact that the idea of revolution in the West playing a decisive role was deep-rooted in the Engels of the 1870s and ‘80s allows us to explain the ultimate dissipation of the hopes he had sometimes harboured as to the possible compatibility of a plebeian-type revolutionary process in Russia with the needs of the working class, socialist revolution in Western Europe. The 1882 Preface to the *Manifesto* appears to have been a compromise, the point at which the distinct positions of the two thinkers met. But by the early 1890s, Engels returned to the same ideas he had expressed in his polemic with Tkachov, discovering in Russian reality what he had claimed to exist years before: the onward march

2. Marx 1975–2004k. [The Progress Publishers Spanish translation cited by Aricó is slightly different, stating that ‘the Russian intelligentsia must concentrate all the living forces of the country to ensure the free development of the rural commune’ – DB.]

3. Engels 1975–2004e.

4. Tvardovskaia 1978, p. 95.

of capitalism and communal property's unstoppable process of disaggregation. But beyond the nuances that we can find in both their discourse, what is really interesting to pick out is the different conceptions of the connection between theory and social change that inspired them. Marx's analysis did not rule out the possibility of capitalist advance in Russia. He simply considered it a historically negative development that men – that is to say, social struggles – had to do everything in their power to avert. Engels, in contrast, assumed the onset of Russian capitalism to be inevitable, and considered this transformation historically progressive. Although Marx did not say this explicitly – he only hinted at it – his analysis leads us to believe that he thought that socialism in Russia largely depended on its ability to *avoid* capitalism. Engels, however, started out from the conviction that socialism in Russia would only be possible subsequent to capitalism. To put it another way, in the 1890s the 'voluntarist' Marx gave way to the 'objectivist' Engels, and through him, there spread in Russia – but elsewhere too – the ideology of 'legal' Marxism. Thus in its early years the young Russian Marxism polemicised against the Narodniks on the basis of the perspectives upheld by Peter Struve. When the split between the two wings of Russian Marxism took place, the counterposition of Narodnik voluntarism and Marxist objectivism was so firmly-established in Lenin's theory of revolution and the party that his analysis left out the hypothesis that underlay Marx's thought, a hypothesis that the German thinker had unsuccessfully attempted to explain in his response to his Narodnik friends and followers. Yet the fact that the crushing majority of the population were the rural masses, linked by communal ties, could not but have profound implications for attempts at a 'Western' model of transition in Russia.

The limitations the Bolsheviks faced as they tried to address the social tensions generated by the October Revolution were, from this point of view, a practical test of the dangerous consequences that ignorance of Marx's hypothesis had for revolutionary theory and practice. Indeed, to develop Marx's analysis – starting by recognising the pertinence of the terms in which he grounded it – meant having to look beyond socialism's narrow 'workerist' vision of mass political phenomena. Certainly, seeing the peasantry as allies of the working class was a step forward in defining the character of Russia's transition. But this was only skirting around the edges of the real question, which was how to genuinely 'unify' the two classes, proletariat and peasantry, in a new historical bloc. This was a question that Lenin was clearly acutely aware of by the end of his life. In this sense, it is worth investigating to what extent we can see a thread that, notwithstanding its interruptions, linked Marx's hypothesis to Lenin's tragic experience in practice and Bukharin's efforts, at the end of the 1920s, to return to the perspective of a revolution based fundamentally on its ability to hegemonise – with

the least social costs possible in the given conditions – a socialist transformation of agrarian structures, and, starting from this, of the whole of society. In his efforts to give a theoretical and social basis to his gradualist positions, Bukharin began to take a more positive stance towards the peasantry, abandoning the tactical ambiguities that had characterised the position of Lenin and the other Bolsheviks. Bukharin upheld the revolutionary potential of the peasantry – not only in Russia, where they were supporting a proletarian revolution, but also worldwide – and, as such, by 1925 he was predicting a period in which the peasantry, under the leadership of the proletariat, would transform itself into the ‘great emancipatory force of our times’. From this conviction stemmed the Comintern Sixth Congress thesis of a global struggle to surround the capitalist cities. On this note, see the relevant sections of Moshe Lewin’s *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates*⁵ and Stephen F. Cohen’s insightful biography *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*.⁶

5. Lewin 1974.

6. Cohen 1980, especially pp. 160–213.

Appendix Five

On the Social-Democratic Leaders' August 1914 'Betrayal'

Essentially 'ideological' analyses of the history of Marxism – and more particularly, of the Second International – have led to countless ambiguities. One of these, perhaps the most damaging to the Third International's whole reading of pre-war socialism, was that of considering the behaviour of the majority of Europe's social-democratic leaders in 1914 simply as the 'betrayal' of the proletariat. But we can see this problem in new, more profound terms if we look beyond the usually-privileged themes and see the struggle for peace – addressed in some substance at all the early twentieth-century national and international congresses – not as the highest principle of the socialists' strategy but rather as a component of a wider and, in its immediate implications, more concrete question. Taking such a perspective, George Haupt demonstrated that 'only starting from a specific understanding of the development of working-class structure and its relationship to the socialist milieu' is it possible to shed light on the real meaning, the social content of the main tendencies at play and the ideological and political debates that animated and divided the International. He highlighted, moreover, that both those who maintain that the masses were disoriented by their leaders' 'betrayal' *and* those who – with good reason – explain the leaders' behaviour in terms of the attitude of the masses themselves, wildly excited by nationalist fervour, leave aside certain factors decisive to explaining these events. For example, the fact that the great actions against the War,

culminating in the Extraordinary Congress at Basle, took place against the backdrop of a profound social and economic malaise and the radicalisation of working-class struggles against rising costs of living. However, on the eve of the War, both this malaise and the level of struggle had abated, the workers' situation now ameliorated somewhat. Thus began a phase marked by a decline in working-class mobilisation. The possible relation between the two phenomena can only be clarified if we abandon the stance from which traditional historiography has examined the history of the international socialist movement (as the history of intellectuals, ideas and institutions). This allows us, instead, to pose a new perspective that focuses on the real forces that constituted the Second International (the same could be said for the Third) and the various national parties that composed it, and thus to attempt to explain the phenomenon through the prism of its national 'prototypes'. As Haupt concludes, 'it is only with reference to the national terrain that we can investigate the actually-existing movements in a concrete and profound way and really allow the diversities and particularities of each country to shine through'. Clearly, these diversities do not rule out the existence of basic common factors corresponding to the totality of the collective actions organised by the proletariat across all countries at any given moment, for which reason the starting point for the international history of the socialist movement must necessarily be situated 'in the interaction between the particular – that is to say, the diversity of working-class movements as phenomena indigenous to a given national society – and the general – that is to say, the global, historical sense of the struggles, expressing a tendency common to modern industrialised societies'.¹

1. Haupt 1973, pp. 93–176, especially pp. 159sq.

Appendix Six

Marx and the Spanish Revolution

Marx's writings on Spain, most of them correspondence and feature-articles for the *New York Daily Tribune*, were compiled by David Riazanov in his 1917 Stuttgart edition of the *Gesammelte Schriften von Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels 1852 bis 1862*, with a brief editor's commentary.¹ They were first published as a separate volume and in the original English by New York's International Publishers in 1939. Andreu Nin had already published a partial Spanish translation in 1929, many other editions of which later followed. We cannot be certain when the Moscow Foreign Languages Publishing House first began to republish them in various languages, but the most recent Spanish edition (excluding certain texts, such as the biography of Bolívar) appeared in 1974.

In 1960, Barcelona publishing house Ariel produced a new translation of the 1939 US edition, adding a foreword that, while initially published without a name, took the signature of its editor Manuel Sacristán from the 1970 third edition onwards. This foreword featured a number of penetrating insights concerning the manner in which Marx addressed the problems of the Spanish Revolution and the history of the country – coinciding with the analytical perspective we have adopted – and which were again reprised by Michael Löwy. As far as we know, Löwy was the first person to engage in a systematic study in these works by Marx, namely the essay 'Marx y la revolución española,

1. Marx and Engels 1917.

1854–1856' in Löwy's 1975 book *Dialéctica y revolución*² (the French original of this article had been published in *Le mouvement social* of July–September 1967).

Rejecting the typical criteria dismissing the political and theoretical importance of Marx's journalistic writings, Löwy undertakes to demonstrate – thus the exceptional significance of his essay – that the theses suggested by Marx concerning the uprisings of 1854–6 'throw fresh light on his thought, underlining, moreover, its surprising "modern relevance" with regard to the socio-political problematic of what has come to be known as the "Third World": military *coups d'état*, guerrilla-warfare, the role of the peasantry, the alternative of bourgeois or socialist revolution, and so on'.³ We do not intend to analyse Marx's theses on Spain, so accurately characterised by Sacristán and Löwy, but simply to show how the stance Marx took and certain of its conclusions – which had they been applied to Latin America, may have allowed him rather more insight into the phenomena taking place on that continent – were, instead, curiously left aside.

It is worth reproducing *in extenso* Riazanov's commentary on the exceptional methodological value of Marx's writings:

What we want to stress here is the following. In no other historical work can we find a similarly complete characterisation of the Spanish war of independence, in all its particular mix of revolutionary and reactionary elements. It was his profound study of the history of the French Convention, the new experiences he had acquired in practice in the Revolution of 1848, and his detailed knowledge of the history of the Hungarian war of independence, that allowed him – unlike other historians – *to not lose himself amidst the labyrinth of pronunciamientos and local episodes and to attribute its heroes their proper importance*. Marx was the only one capable of this penetrating critique of the tactics of the revolutionary minority and of explaining its lamentable 1814 defeat. It was its incapacity to carry through social changes at the same time as enacting the necessary measures for national defence that turned it into an instrument of counter-revolution. Instead of destroying feudal society with all its privileges 'in the name of the defence of the fatherland' as had France's Committee of Public Safety, Spain's Central Junta made an appeal to popular prejudices, strengthening all the forces of the old society, from the royal court to the nobility and the Church. Marx's history of the development of the Spanish constitution from 1812 onwards also shows that his 'economic materialism' did not in any way prevent him from *recognising the specific features of the historical process in different countries, which could take shape and develop on the same economic basis under the influence of differing*

2. Löwy 1975.

3. Löwy 1975, p. 37.

*empirical circumstances and with varying natural conditions, race-relations and past external influences.*⁴

What is surprising, however, is that all the positive aspects of Marx's analysis highlighted by Riazanov (and in turn, by Löwy and Sacristán) – those that we have italicised in the above transcription – are notable for their absence in his 'Latin-American' works, and virtually contradicted in the particular case of his article on Bolívar. From this we can draw new and illustrative evidence strengthening our hypothesis that we cannot explain Marx's paradoxical attitude towards Latin America in terms of journalistic 'superficiality', a historian's inexperience, 'methodological' limitations or, indeed, 'Eurocentrist' disdain. All these limitations could only arise and distort his reflections given the previous, prejudicial existence of a *political* attitude that clouded his judgement.

Sacristán stresses that Marx's analysis of Spanish particularity operated largely at the *superstructural* level of institutions, culture, politics and the public psyche. It is for this reason that he re-evaluates the political role of the Spanish army, attributing some importance to the country's tradition of repeated uprisings against isolated *camarillas* and seeing the Spanish monarchy's weak centralisation as among the conditions favouring the rise of the guerrilla resistance against Napoleon. Although he appealed to traditional values when he spoke of certain personalities (for instance Espartero,⁵ and, indeed, Bolívar), on the whole he did so only rhetorically, and never applied these to his judgement of events. The truly relevant thing to note about Marx's writings on Spain is the methodological flexibility that he displayed. Sacristán showed how Marx's method avoided the easy empirical recourse 'to a particularity hemmed in by a complex of national realities': his insistent search for the peculiarity of the Spanish Revolution

was not the fruit of some facile postulation of mysterious, everlasting and rationally inexplicable limitations within the 'soul' or 'lived reality' of certain peoples. It was not rooted in such conjecture: rather, it was ultimately the consequence of a methodological principle, namely that of the importance of the dialectical role of superstructural elements – tradition, culture, institutions, politics, religion – as they rebounded on the basic structural elements of social life.⁶

Marx's strength, then, lay in the fact that he proceeded from the terrain of political facts – or, to put it another way, from superstructural elements – without ever leaving them behind to the point of getting tangled up 'as if without

4. Riazanov's commentary, in Marx and Engels 1917, p. 551.

5. [Don Joaquín Baldomero Fernández-Espartero y Alvarez de Toro, the liberals' champion in their struggle against the Carlists, Regent of Spain 1840–3 – DB.]

6. Sacristán in Marx and Engels 1970, pp. 138q.

attempting to, by introducing the – now obvious – matter of the society’s “natural conditions”’.⁷ Marx’s method, Sacristán concludes, was

to embark on the explanation of a given political phenomenon in such a way that the analysis works through all of its superstructural instances before turning to its underlying socio-economic foundations. As such he avoided the latter becoming a sort of *deus ex machina* without any meaningful interpretative value. This stance supposed an epistemological principle that can be expressed thus: *the order of analysis in the investigation is the inverse of the real order grounding the method itself*.⁸

It is all this richness of analysis, all these exceptional possibilities entailed in his method, that Marx implicitly left to one side when he analysed certain other phenomena, even though they were comparable to those he was simultaneously devoting such care to. Finally, we should recall the words he used to criticise those who ‘instead of seeing the strength and resourcefulness of these peoples in their provincial and local organisation, have drunk at the well of the official histories’. But is this not precisely what Marx did with Bolívar?

* * *

More recently, José Miguel Fernández Urbina published an article in *Tiempo de Historia* entitled ‘Marx y la historia de España’,⁹ in which the author carefully examined the distinctive characteristics of Marx’s writings through the prism of certain thematic areas.

Fernández Urbina highlighted Marx’s analysis of the distinct role that the absolutist monarchy played in Spain as compared to those elsewhere in Europe, allowing him to draw the surprising conclusion that Spain was characterised by ‘Asiatic forms of government’. According to Marx:

Spain, like Turkey, remained an agglomeration of mismanaged republics with a nominal sovereign at their head. Despotism changed character in the different provinces with the arbitrary interpretation of the general laws by viceroys and governors; but despotic as was the government it did not prevent the provinces from subsisting with different laws and customs, different coins, military banners of different colors, and with their respective systems of taxation. The oriental despotism attacks municipal self-government only when opposed to its direct interests, but is very glad to allow those institutions to continue so

7. Sacristán in Marx and Engels 1970, p. 14.

8. Ibid. Our italics.

9. Fernández Urbina 1979.

long as they take off its shoulders the duty of doing something and spare it the trouble of regular administration.¹⁰

As for the army's leading role, either 'when taking the revolutionary initiative, [or] when spoiling the revolution by praetorianism',¹¹ Marx identified the reasons for this in the deep, radical transformations that took place within this institution during the war of independence. The underlying axis of Spain's political convulsions, lasting throughout the nineteenth century, was the specific function of the army, itself expressing the general weakness of the state and the political system. As Marx made clear, and as Fernández Urbina recalled in his interesting work, the repeated military *pronunciamientos* were possible because

firstly, what we call the state, in the modern sense of the word, had no real embodiment beyond the royal court, given the almost exclusively provincial life of the people, if they were not in the army. Secondly, the particular position of Spain and the war of independence created conditions in which the army emerged as the only place in which the vital forces of the Spanish nation could be concentrated.¹²

From this dual analytical perspective, we observe a territorial unit that was in fact a 'conglomerate of little-coordinated republics' and where the army was the exclusive site for the 'concentration of the vital forces of the nation'. Marx saw this clearly in Spanish reality: so should he not have portrayed a Bolívar more rooted in Latin-American reality, itself surprisingly evocative of these two phenomena? It is true that Spain's disaggregation into regions had to be compared to a past of imperial grandeur and strong national identity, but it should also be remembered that the Spanish America of the wars of independence was also something of a tributary of this past, and that a substantial feeling of continental unity animated the struggles of the American patriots at the very heart of Bolívar's project. What remains surprising is the fact that Marx could have grasped such a project *only* as the ridiculous, unmeasured project of the 'dastardly, most miserable and meanest of blackguards', without even asking himself about the factors behind the historical-political order that gave meaning to such a vision. After all, no matter how unrealistic the project may have been, in its time the Latin-American revolutionary élites did see it as a possible or even necessary conclusion to the war of independence.

The hypothesis that Marx's political prejudices biased him against certain implications of the independence process is confirmed if we give these texts due focus. For example, the article in which Marx condemned the political conduct

10. Marx 1975–2004], p. 396.

11. Marx 1975–2004], p. 423.

12. In Marx and Engels 1970, pp. 29–30.

of the 'Americans' grouping in the Cádiz Cortes. Starting from an analysis that portrayed the Americans as patriots and independence-fighters in Spanish America but allies of the most reactionary and conservative classes of the old order in Spain, Marx attributed them partial responsibility for the defeat of the Spanish Revolution. The most determined enemies of the Cortes and the 1812 Constitution were able to triumph, according to Marx, thanks to the help the Americans lent them, 'always combining with the Serviles in the appointment of the executive power, the weakening of which they considered necessary for the attainment of American independence from the mother country, since they were sure that an executive simply at variance with the sovereign Cortes would prove insufficient'.¹³ To some extent, the Americans came to fulfil the same 'reactionary' role that the South Slav nationalities had in the European Revolution of 1848. In a work that only became available to us after we had completed the first edition of this book, the Puerto Rican Rúa closely examined Marx's attitude to these events, reaching a conclusion that we can only agree with:

If the 'Americans' were ready to contribute to this struggle, namely, to the victory of the forces who wished to restore Spain's *ancien régime*, Marx could not but characterise their historical role as reactionary and contrary to popular interests. In turn, Marx could not but judge the independence movement's demands as being of an oppressive and reactionary slant, contrary to popular interests. All this was further intensified by the peculiar fact that the demand for Latin-American independence, in this period, was anointed as a *pro-royalist* uprising – favouring the return to power of Fernando VII – since this struggle clashed with the Cortes and the 1812 Constitution, to which the Iberian troops in America now answered.¹⁴

For numerous reasons, then, Marx's analysis of Bolivar cannot be understood without reference to the context of his works on Spain. For many years, as we have already described, this was universally recognised, and as such this piece was always included in the various compilations produced regarding Spain. Its exclusion from the most recent Soviet edition in 1974 may be intended to serve the dual purpose of extirpating a text with irritating resonances for Latin Americans and which, taken in isolation, helps to sustain the idea that Marx had at hand only 'partial' and 'limited' sources. But re-inserted into the period in which Marx was studying the insurrectionary movements in Spain – his breadth of perspectives, wealth of sources and passion for the subject studied in detail by Maximilien Rubel in 'Les cahiers d'étude de Marx'¹⁵ – the text attacking

13. Marx 1975–2004l, p. 428.

14. Rúa 1978, p. 43.

15. Rubel 1974.

Bolivar can logically and reasonably be explained. His readings of Ducoudray Holstein, John Miller and Colonel Hippisley thus served to validate a position he had adopted in advance: Marx's decision to base himself on these sources was a result of the fact that they coincided with what he thought already.¹⁶

16. [This section after the asterisks only appears in the second edition – DB.]

Appendix Seven

Aníbal Ponce's 'Marginal Notes'

The publication of Marx's article in the first issue of *Dialéctica* was preceded by Aníbal Ponce's 'marginal notes', in which he totally identified himself with its contents. Ponce attempted to salvage the three references Marx had made to the political ideas of the "Liberator" (a term that our commentator always rendered in quotation-marks). The first, regarding the Bolivian Code; the second, Bolivar's attitude to Páez; and thirdly, the Panama Congress. From these three references, according to Ponce, 'there emerges very clearly a thought that Marx did no more than corroborate: Bolivar was an aristocrat who "by force, mingled with intrigue" used the words "constitution", "federalism" and "international democracy" with the sole intention of establishing his own dictatorship. A separatist, yes; a democrat, no'.¹ According to Ponce, the text of the Bolivian Code, Bolivar's speech at the Angostura Congress of 1818, and the 'Memoria' addressed to the citizens of New Grenada all fully corresponded to Bolivar's thought, totally confirming Marx's opinion: 'Bombastic, *encyclopédiste* and federalist phraseology masking the harsh realities of an aristocratic despotism. Disdain for the masses, a hereditary senate and a president for life'.² However, Marx was apparently unable to explain in his article what the causes of such a dictatorship actually were. According to Ponce, this stemmed from the fact that 'he could not have said

1. Ponce 1974, Vol. 4, p. 562.

2. Ponce 1974, Vol. 4, p. 563.

this in the pages of the encyclopaedia that he was writing for, since he was working to earn a crust'. To put it another way, while knowing the reasons behind it, he could not however explain them, either because he was not allowed to or else because he was afraid of how the editor would react (otherwise, it makes no sense to refer to Marx's economic pressures). However, it was precisely because he determined to writing down all his thoughts in this work that there was such friction between him and Charles Dana. As Marx himself wrote, 'I departed somewhat from the tone of a cyclopaedia. To see the dastardly, most miserable and meanest of blackguards described as Napoleon I was altogether too much'. At all events, while Marx did not provide a valid explanation of Bolivar's dictatorship, according to Ponce he nonetheless set us on the right path with his references to the '*familias mantuanas*' and the 'creole nobility'. These are the paths by which Ponce can complete what Marx only suggested: 'A landlord, rancher and owner of mines and slaves, Bolivar not only interpreted the interests of his class, but defended them against the liberal petty-bourgeoisie and the masses still lacking in consciousness'.³ This is a rather typical example of the generalities – in this case, vacuities – that economic-reductionist efforts to 'complete' Marx can lead to. It is of no analytical merit to attempt to substitute words like 'class', 'liberal petty-bourgeoisie' and 'masses still lacking in consciousness' for an actual specification of these terms' meaning in the concrete situation concerned and how they related to the aspirations and needs of the men there present at the time. All of these categories – which can be useful only on condition that they facilitate the elaboration of why it is that men live in a given manner and have certain attitudes and thoughts – end up explaining nothing. Among other reasons, this is because the inevitable conclusion – an imitation-philosophy of history – prevents recognition of the singular fact that men's attitudes are never directly determined by the political and economic environment in which they are active. Many Marxists, while accepting Marx's paradigm that men make their own history but in given circumstances, end up failing to understand that these circumstances are themselves seen by men in a 'particular' way, and what is truly important in theory and in history is to study this particularity.

Ponce's marginal notes, and, indeed, his decision to publish Marx's article, were motivated by the explicitly *political* concern of challenging the theories of certain Latin-American nationalists and anti-imperialists, such as Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre and José Vasconcelos.⁴ Arguing that Bolivar's 'ideals' were not of 'an emancipatory, anti-imperialist sense' – and nor could they have been, given the support they enjoyed from the quarter of England – Ponce concluded that Bolivar the individual could not genuinely serve the cause of so-called

3. Ibid.

4. Ponce 1974, Vol. 4, p. 561.

‘democratic, anti-imperialist Bolivarianism’. His commentary ended with these truly terrible lines:

If Bolívar were alive today, we can be sure that he would not be among the ranks of the students and workers. *There is a reason* why the two most eloquent homages to his memory feature the signatures of two despots: that of General Antonio Guzmán Blanco, acquired by the O’Leary archive, and that of Juan Vincente Gómez, included in the complete edition of the *Cartas*.⁵

Ponce’s obstinate rationalism led him to disregard what Marx himself knew perfectly well, namely the *reasons* behind the taste for despotism throughout human history: ‘The mythopoeic power of popular fantasy has always shown itself in the creation of “great men”. *Simon Bolívar* is undeniably the most convincing illustration of this.’⁶ Preoccupied with restoring a ‘historical record’ that was nothing of the sort, Ponce went so far as to leave aside the – very Marxist indeed – question of the concrete process by which collective mentalities are formed; that is to say, he forgot that men only take consciousness of social structures by means of ideas, and that these ideas, therefore, can acquire the substance of ‘material forces’ without thus having to be ‘real’ in the sense suggested by Ponce.

5. Ponce 1974, Vol. 4, p. 563; our italics.

6. Marx 1975–2004m, p. 328.

Appendix Eight

On the Effect of British Hegemony in Latin America

According to Halperín Donghi, Great Britain's political aspirations in Latin America were defined by the type of economic interest that tied it to the region. London and its local agents did not always share the same criteria: the latter were 'merchant representatives' who 'sought to maintain present advantages along with a reasonable degree of internal order'.¹ British policy was characterised by its extreme caution. Rather than a declared aim of undermining the new states, Britain's preference – the maintenance of the political fragmentation inherited from the revolution – was based on the fear of the consequences that any change in the unstable Latin-American situation might give rise to. But 'Whenever the aggregation of fragmented states into larger units appeared a real possibility, the British in fact supported it, as in the case of Bolívar's gestures at Pan-Hispanism or Santa Cruz's attempt at a Peruvian-Bolivian confederation'.² Although England's attitude in the Argentine-Brazilian conflict appeared to break from these criteria – imposing the creation of the Uruguayan Republic – in reality it only did this out of the belief that this was the best means of ensuring peace in the region and resuming commerce as quickly as possible.

A protracted struggle over questions of political organization was much more likely to damage

1. Halperín Donghi 1993, p. 84.

2. Ibid.

British interests than the maintenance of the smaller republics that had emerged spontaneously in the wake of the wars of independence. On the other hand, the highly advantageous British commercial accommodation in Brazil suggests that the dominant world power of the day had, at any rate, little reason to fear the power of large Spanish American republics.³

As for the Bolivarian project, England was neither displeased by its plan to restore the essential features of the colonial order nor by the republicanism with which this project was branded. Moreover, the sympathy it held it in was not at all tarnished by the prospect that Bolívar would unite a large part of the former Spanish empire under his leadership. Thus there is no basis at all 'to believe that the new hegemonic power systematically favoured the disaggregation of Latin America'.⁴ The fact is that Bolívar's project could have survived even without England's backing. As such we can cast aside the facile recurrence to the *Deus ex machina* of British policy – held to be directly and exclusively to blame for the fragmentation of the continent – and our search can, instead, turn to the real 'internal' economic, political and social factors that, rather than *provoking* the fragmentation of something that had only ever been united during the period of Spanish rule (and even then only to a certain extent), instead posed various barriers to its being overcome.

3. Halperín Donghi 1993, pp. 84–5.

4. Halperín Donghi 1969, p. 173. [The 1993 English edition is heavily edited and this line does not appear in it – DB.]

Appendix Nine

Karl Marx

Bolivar y Ponte¹

Bolivar y Ponte, Simon, the 'liberator' of Colombia, born at Caracas, 24 July 1783, died at San Pedro, near Santa Martha, December 17 1830. He was the son of one of the *familias Mantuanas*, which, at the time of the Spanish supremacy, constituted the creole nobility in Venezuela. In compliance with the custom of wealthy Americans of those times, at the early age of 14 he was sent to Europe. From Spain, he passed to France, and resided for some years in Paris. In 1802, he married in Madrid, and returned to Venezuela, where his wife died suddenly of yellow fever. After this, he visited Europe a second time, and was present at Napoleon's coronation as emperor, in 1804, and at his assumption of the iron crown of Lombardy, in 1805. In 1809, he returned home, and despite the importunities of Joseph Felix Ribas, his cousin, he declined to join in the revolution which broke out at Caracas on 19 April 1810 but, after the event, he accepted a mission to London to purchase arms and solicit the protection of the British government. Apparently well received by the Marquis of Wellesley, then secretary for foreign affairs, he obtained nothing beyond the liberty to export arms for ready cash with the payment of heavy duties upon them. On his return from London, he again withdrew to private life, until September 1811, when he was prevailed upon by General Miranda, then commander-in-chief of the insurgent land- and sea-forces, to accept the rank

1. Marx 1858.

of lieutenant-colonel in the staff, and the command of Puerto Cabello, the strongest fortress of Venezuela.

The Spanish prisoners-of-war, whom Miranda used regularly to send to Puerto Cabello, to be confined in the citadel, having succeeded in overcoming their guards by surprise and in seizing the citadel, Bolivar, although they were unarmed, while he had a numerous garrison and large magazines, embarked precipitately in the night, with eight of his officers, without giving notice to his own troops, arrived at daybreak at La Guayra, and retired to his estate at San Mateo. On becoming aware of their commander's flight, the garrison retired in good order from the place, which was immediately occupied by the Spaniards under Monteverde. This event turned the scale in favour of Spain, and obliged Miranda, on the authority of the Congress, to sign the Treaty of Vittoria of 26 July 1812, which restored Venezuela to the Spanish rule. On 30 July, Miranda arrived at La Guayra, where he intended to embark onboard an English vessel. On his visit to the commander of the place, Colonel Manuel Maria Casas, he met with a numerous company, among whom were Don Miguel Pena and Simon Bolivar, who persuaded him to stay, for one night at least, in Casas's house. At two o'clock in the morning, when Miranda was soundly sleeping, Casas, Pena, and Bolivar entered his room, with four armed soldiers, cautiously seized his sword and pistol, then awakened him, abruptly told him to rise and dress himself, put him into irons, and had him finally surrendered to Monteverde, who dispatched him to Cadiz, where, after some years' captivity, he died in irons. This act, committed on the pretext that Miranda had betrayed his country by the capitulation of Vittoria, procured for Bolivar Monteverde's peculiar favour, so that when he demanded his passport, Monteverde declared, 'Colonel Bolivar's request should be complied with, as a reward for his having served the King of Spain by delivering up Miranda'.

He was thus allowed to sail for Curacao, where he spent six weeks, and proceeded, in company with his cousin Ribas, to the little Republic of Carthagená. Previous to their arrival, a great number of soldiers who had served under General Miranda had fled to Carthagená. Ribas proposed to them to undertake an expedition against the Spaniards in Venezuela, and to accept Bolivar as their commander-in-chief. The former proposition they embraced eagerly; to the latter they demurred, but at last yielded, on the condition of Ribas being the second-in-command. Manuel Rodriguez Torrices, the President of the Republic of Carthagená, added to the 800 soldiers thus enlisted under Bolivar, 500 men under the command of his cousin, Manuel Castillo. The expedition started in the beginning of January 1813. Dissensions as to the supreme command breaking out between Bolivar and Castillo, the latter suddenly decamped with his Grenadians. Bolivar, on his part, proposed to follow Castillo's example, and

return to Carthagena, but Ribas persuaded him at length to pursue his course at least as far as Bogota, at that time the seat of the Congress of New Granada. They were well received, supported in every way, and were both made generals by the Congress, and, after having divided their little army into two columns, they marched by different routes upon Caracas. The further they advanced, the stronger grew their resources; the cruel excesses of the Spaniards acting everywhere as the recruiting sergeants for the army of the independents. The power of resistance on the part of the Spaniards was broken, partly by the circumstance of three-quarters of their army being composed of natives, who bolted on every encounter to the opposite ranks, partly by the cowardice of such generals as Tiscar, Cajigal, and Fierro, who, on every occasion, deserted their own troops. Thus it happened that San Iago Marino, an ignorant youth, had contrived to dislodge the Spaniards from the provinces of Curnana and Barcelona, at the very time that Bolivar was advancing through the western provinces. The only serious resistance, on the part of the Spaniards, was directed against the column of Ribas, who, however, routed General Monteverde at Lostaguanes, and forced him to shut himself up in Puerto Cabello with the remainder of his troops.

On hearing of Bolivar's approach, General Fierro, the Governor of Caracas, sent deputies to propose a capitulation, which was concluded at Vittoria; but Fierro, struck by a sudden panic, and not expecting the return of his own emissaries, secretly decamped in the night, leaving more than 1,500 Spaniards at the discretion of the enemy. Bolivar was now honoured with a public triumph. Standing in a triumphal car, drawn by 12 young ladies, dressed in white, adorned with the national colours, and all selected from the first families of Caracas, Bolivar, bareheaded, in full uniform, and wielding a small baton in his hand, was in about half an hour dragged from the entrance of the city to his residence. Having proclaimed himself 'dictator and liberator of the western provinces of Venezuela' – Marino had assumed the title of 'dictator of the eastern provinces' – he created 'the order of the liberator', established a choice corps of troops under the name of his bodyguard, and surrounded himself with the show of a court. But, like most of his countrymen, he was averse to any prolonged exertion, and his dictatorship soon proved a military anarchy, leaving the most important affairs in the hands of favourites, who squandered the finances of the country, and then resorted to odious means in order to restore them. The new enthusiasm of the people was thus turned to dissatisfaction, and the scattered forces of the enemy were allowed to recover. While, in the beginning of August 1813, Monteverde was shut up in the fortress of Puerto Cabello, and the Spanish army reduced to the possession of a small strip of land in the north-western part of Venezuela, four months later, in December, the liberator's prestige was gone, and Caracas itself threatened, by the sudden appearance in its neighbourhood of the victorious

Spaniards under Boves. To strengthen his tottering power, Bolivar assembled, on 1 January 1814, a junta of the most influential inhabitants of Caracas, declaring himself to be unwilling any longer to bear the burden of dictatorship. Hurtado Mendoza, on the other hand, argued, in a long oration, 'the necessity of leaving the supreme power in the hands of General Bolivar, until the Congress of New Granada could meet, and Venezuela be united under one government'.

This proposal was accepted, and the dictatorship was thus invested with some sort of legal sanction.

The war with the Spaniards was, for some time, carried on in a series of small actions, with no decisive advantage to either of the contending parties. In June 1814, Boves marched with his united forces from Calabozo on La Puerta, where the two dictators, Bolivar and Marino, had formed a junction, met them, and ordered an immediate attack. After some resistance, Bolivar fled toward Caracas, while Marino disappeared in the direction of Cumana. Puerto Cabello and Valencia fell into the hands of Boves, who then detached two columns (one of them under the command of Colonel Gonzales), by different roads, upon Caracas. Ribas tried in vain to oppose the advance of Gonzales. On the surrender of Caracas to Gonzales, 17 July 1814, Bolivar evacuated La Guayra, ordered the vessels lying in the harbour of that town to sail for Cuntana, and retreated with the remainder of his troops upon Barcelona. After a defeat inflicted on the insurgents by Boves on 8 August 1814 at Argueta, Bolivar left his troops the same night secretly to hasten, through by-roads, to Cumana, where, despite the angry protests of Ribas, he at once embarked on board the *Bianchi*, together with Marino and some other officers. If Ribas, Paez, and other generals had followed the dictators in their flight, everything would have been lost. Treated by General Arismendi, on their arrival at Juan Griego, in the island of Margarita, as deserters, and ordered to depart, they sailed for Carupano, whence, meeting with a similar reception on the part of Colonel Bermudez, they steered toward Carthagena. There, to palliate their flight, they published a justificatory memoir, in high-sounding phraseology.

Having joined a plot for the overthrow of the government of Carthagena, Bolivar had to leave that little republic, and proceeded to Tunja, where the Congress of the federalist republic of New Granada was sitting. At that time, the province of Cundinamarca stood at the head of the independent provinces which refused to adopt the Granadian federal compact, while Quito, Pasto, Santa Martha and other provinces still remained in the power of the Spaniards. Bolivar, who arrived at Tunja on 22 November 1814, was created by the Congress commander-in-chief of the federalist forces, and received the dual mission of forcing the president of the province of Cundinamarca to acknowledge the authority of the Congress, and of then marching against Santa Martha, the only fortified seaport the Spaniards still retained in New Granada. The first point was easily

carried, Bogota, the capital of the disaffected province, being a defenceless town. In spite of its capitulation, Bolivar allowed it to be sacked during 48 hours by his troops. At Santa Martha, the Spanish general Montalvo, having a feeble garrison of less than 200 men, and a fortress in a miserable state of defence, had already bespoken a French vessel, in order to secure his own flight, while the inhabitants of the town sent word to Bolivar that on his appearance they would open the gates and drive out the garrison. But instead of marching, as he was ordered by the Congress, against the Spaniards at Santa Martha, he indulged his rancour against Castillo, the commander of Carthagena, took upon himself to lead his troops against the latter town, which constituted an integral part of the federal republic. Beaten back, he encamped upon La Papa, a large hill, about gunshot-distance from Carthagena, and established a single small cannon as a battery against a place provided with about eighty guns. He afterward converted the siege into a blockade, which lasted till the beginning of May without any other result than that of reducing his army, by desertion and malady, from 2,400 men to about 700. Meanwhile, a great Spanish expedition from Cadiz had arrived on 25 March 1815 under General Morillo, at the island of Margarita, and had been able to throw powerful reinforcements into Santa Martha, and soon after to take Carthagena itself. Previously, however, Bolivar had embarked for Jamaica, on 10 May 1815, with about a dozen of his officers, on an armed English brig. Having arrived at the place of refuge, he again published a proclamation, representing himself as the victim of some secret enemy or faction, and defending his flight before the approaching Spaniards as a resignation of command out of deference for the public peace.

During his eight months' stay at Kingston, the generals he had left in Venezuela, and General Arismendi in the island of Margarita, staunchly held their ground against the Spanish arms. But Ribas, from whom Bolivar had derived his reputation, having been shot by the Spaniards after the capture of Maturin, there appeared in his stead another man on the stage, of still greater abilities, who, being as a foreigner unable to play an independent part in the South-American Revolution, finally resolved to act under Bolivar. This was Louis Brion. To bring aid to the revolutionists, he had sailed from London for Carthagena with a corvette of 24 guns, equipped, in great part, at his own expense, with 14,000 stand of arms and a great quantity of military stores. Arriving too late to be useful in that quarter, he re-embarked for Cayes, in Hayti, whither many emigrant-patriots had repaired after the surrender of Carthagena. Bolivar, meanwhile, had also departed from Kingston to Port-au-Prince, where, on his promise of emancipating the slaves, Petion, the President of Haiti, offered him large supplies for a new expedition against the Spaniards in Venezuela. At Cayes, he met Brion and the other emigrants, and in a general meeting proposed himself as the chief of

the new expedition, on the condition of uniting the civil and military power in his person until the assembling of a general congress. The majority accepting his terms, the expedition sailed on 16 April 1816, with him as its commander and Brion as its admiral. At Margarita, the former succeeded in winning over Arismendi, the commander of the island, in which he had reduced the Spaniards to the single spot of Pampatar. On Bolivar's formal promise to convoke a national congress at Venezuela, as soon as he should be master of the country, Arismendi summoned a junta in the cathedral of La Villa del Norte, and publicly proclaimed him the commander-in-chief of the republics of Venezuela and New Granada. On 31 May 1816, Bolivar landed at Carupano, but did not dare prevent Marino and Piar from separating from him, and carrying on a war against Cumana under their own auspices. Weakened by this separation, he set sail, on Brion's advice, for Ocumare, where he arrived on 3 July 1816, with 13 vessels, of which only seven were armed. His army mustered but 650 men, swelled by the enrolment of negroes whose emancipation he had proclaimed to about 800. At Ocumare, he again issued a proclamation, promising 'to exterminate the tyrants' and to 'convoke the people to name their deputies to Congress'.

On his advance in the direction of Valencia, he met, not far from Ocumare, the Spanish general Morales at the head of about 200 soldiers and 100 militia men. The skirmishers of Morales having dispersed his advanced guard, he lost, as an eyewitness records, 'all presence of mind, spoke not a word, turned his horse quickly round, and fled in full speed toward Ocumare, passed the village at full gallop, arrived at the neighbouring bay, jumped from his horse, got into a boat, and embarked on the *Diana*, ordering the whole squadron to follow him to the little island of Buen Ayre, and leaving all his companions without any means of assistance'.

On Brion's rebukes and admonitions, he again joined the other commanders on the coast of Cumana, but being harshly received, and threatened by Piar with trial before a court-martial as a deserter and a coward, he quickly retraced his steps to Cayes. After months of exertion, Brion at length succeeded in persuading a majority of the Venezuelan military chiefs, who felt the want of at least a nominal centre, to recall Bolivar as their general-in-chief, upon the express condition that he should assemble a congress, and not meddle with the civil administration. On 31 December 1816, he arrived at Barcelona with the arms, munitions of war, and provisions supplied by Petion. Joined on 2 January 1817 by Arismendi, on 4 January he proclaimed martial law and the union of all powers in his single person; but five days later, when Arismendi had fallen into an ambush laid by the Spaniards, the dictator fled to Barcelona. The troops rallied at the latter place, whither Brion also sent him guns and reinforcements, so that he soon mustered a new corps of 1,100 men. On 5 April, the Spaniards took

possession of the town of Barcelona, and the patriot-troops retreated toward the charity-house, a building isolated from Barcelona, and entrenched on Bolivar's order, but unfit to shelter a garrison of 1,000 men from a serious attack. He left the post during the night of 5 April, informing Colonel Freitas, to whom he transferred his command, that he was going in search of more troops, and would soon return. Trusting this promise, Freitas declined the offer of a capitulation, and, after the assault, was slaughtered with the whole garrison by the Spaniards.

Piar, a man of colour and native of Curaçao, conceived and executed the conquest of the provinces of Guyana; Admiral Brion supporting that enterprise with his gun-boats. On 20 July, the whole of the provinces being evacuated by the Spaniards, Piar, Brion, Zea, Marino, Arismendi and others assembled a provincial congress at Angostura, and put at the head of the executive a triumvirate, of which Brion, hating Piar and deeply interested in Bolivar, in whose success he had embarked his large private fortune, contrived that the latter should be appointed a member, notwithstanding his absence. On these tidings, Bolivar left his retreat for Angostura, where, emboldened by Brion, he dissolved the Congress and the triumvirate, to replace them by a 'supreme council of the nation', with himself as the chief, Brion and Antonio Francisco Zea as the directors, the former of the military, the latter of the political section. However, Piar, the conqueror of Guyana, who once before had threatened to try him before a court-martial as a deserter, was not sparing of his sarcasms against the 'Napoleon of the retreat', and Bolivar consequently accepted a plan for getting rid of him. On the false accusation of having conspired against the whites, plotted against Bolivar's life, and aspired to the supreme power, Piar was arraigned before a war-council under the presidency of Brion, convicted, condemned to death, and shot on 16 October 1817. His death struck Marino with terror. Fully aware of his own nothingness when deprived of Piar, he, in a most abject letter, publicly calumniated his murdered friend, deprecated his own attempts at rivalry with the liberator, and threw himself upon Bolivar's inexhaustible fund of magnanimity.

The conquest by Piar of Guyana had completely changed the situation in favour of the patriots; that single province affording them more resources than all the other seven provinces of Venezuela together. A new campaign, announced by Bolivar through a new proclamation was, therefore, generally expected to result in the final expulsion of the Spaniards. This first bulletin, which described some small Spanish foraging parties withdrawing from Calabozo as 'armies flying before our victorious troops', was not calculated to damp these hopes. Against about 4,000 Spaniards, whose junction had not yet been effected by Morillo, he mustered more than 9,000 men, well-armed, equipped, and amply furnished with all the necessities of war. Nevertheless, towards the end of May 1818, he had lost about a dozen battles and all the provinces lying on the northern side

of the Orinoco. Scattering as he did his superior forces, they were always beaten in detail. Leaving the conduct of the war to Paez and his other subordinates, he retired to Angostura. Defection followed upon defection, and everything seemed to be drifting to utter ruin. At this most critical moment, a new combination of fortunate accidents again changed the face of affairs. At Angostura he met with Santander, a native of New Granada, who begged for the means of invading that territory, where the population were prepared for a general rising against the Spaniards. This request, to some extent, he complied with, while powerful succours in men, vessels, and munitions of war poured in from England, and English, French, German, and Polish officers, flocked to Angostura. Lastly, Dr. German Roscio, dismayed at the declining fortune of the South-American Revolution, stepped forward, laid hold of Bolivar's mind, and induced him to convene, on 15 February 1819, a national congress, the mere name of which proved powerful enough to create a new army of about 14,000 men, so that Bolivar found himself enabled to resume the offensive.

The foreign officers suggested to him the plan of making a display of an intention to attack Caracas, and free Venezuela from the Spanish yoke, and thus induce Morillo to weaken New Granada and concentrate his forces upon Venezuela, while he (Bolivar) should suddenly turn to the west, unite with Santander's guerrillas, and march upon Bogota. To execute this plan, he left Angostura on 24 February 1810, after having nominated Zea President of the Congress and Vice-President of the Republic during his absence. By the manoeuvres of Paez, Morillo and La Torre were routed at Achaguas, and would have been destroyed if Bolivar had effected a junction between his own troops and those of Paez and Marino. At all events, the victories of Paez led to the occupation of the province of Barima, which opened to Bolivar the way into New Granada. Everything being here prepared by Santander, the foreign troops, consisting mainly of Englishmen, decided the fate of New Granada by the successive victories won on 1 and 23 July and 7 August, in the province of Tunja. On 12 August, Bolivar made a triumphal entry into Bogota, while the Spaniards, all the Granadian provinces having risen against them, shut themselves up in the fortified town of Mompox.

Having regulated the Granadian Congress at Bogota, and installed General Santander as commander-in-chief, Bolivar marched toward Pamplona, where he spent about two months in festivals and balls. On 3 November, he arrived at Montecal, in Venezuela, whither he had directed the patriotic chieftains of that territory to assemble with their troops. With a treasury of about \$2,000,000, raised from the inhabitants of New Granada by forced contributions, and with a disposable force of about 9,000 men, the third part of whom consisted of well-disciplined English, Irish, Hanoverians, and other foreigners, he had now to encounter an enemy stripped of all resources and reduced to a nominal force

of about 4,500 men, two-thirds of whom were natives, and, therefore, not to be relied upon by the Spaniards. Morillo withdrawing from San Fernando de Apure to San Carlos, Bolivar followed him up to Calabozo, so that the hostile headquarters were only two days' march from each other. If Bolivar had boldly advanced, the Spaniards would have been crushed by his European troops alone, but he preferred protracting the war for five years longer.

In October 1819, the Congress of Angostura had forced Zea, his nominee, to resign his office, and chosen Arismendi in his place. On receiving this news, Bolivar suddenly marched his foreign legion toward Angostura, surprised Arismendi, who had 600 natives only, exiled him to the island of Margarita, and restored Zea to his dignities. Dr. Roscio, fascinating him with the prospects of centralised power, led him to proclaim the 'Republic of Colombia', comprising New Granada and Venezuela, to publish a fundamental law for the new state, drawn up by Roscio, and to consent to the establishment of a common congress for both provinces. On 20 January 1820, he had again returned to San Fernando de Apure. His sudden withdrawal of the foreign legion, which was more dreaded by the Spaniards than ten times the number of Colombians, had given Morillo a new opportunity to collect reinforcements, while the tidings of a formidable expedition to start from Spain under O'Donnell raised the sinking spirits of the Spanish party. Notwithstanding his vastly superior forces, Bolivar contrived to accomplish nothing during the campaign of 1820. Meanwhile, the news arrived from Europe that the Revolution in the Isla de Leon had put a forcible end to O'Donnell's intended expedition. In New Granada, 15 provinces out of 22 had joined the government of Colombia, and the Spaniards now held there only the fortresses of Carthagena and the isthmus of Panama. In Venezuela, six provinces out of eight obeyed the laws of Colombia. Such was the state of things when Bolivar allowed himself to be inveigled by Morillo into negotiations resulting, on 25 November 1820, in the conclusion at Truxillo of a truce for six months. In the truce, no mention was made of the Republic of Colombia, although the congress had expressly forbidden any treaty to be concluded with the Spanish commander before the acknowledgment on his part of the independence of the Republic.

On 17 December, Morillo, anxious to play his part in Spain, embarked at Puerto Cabello, leaving the command-in-chief to Miguel de la Torre, and on 10 March 1821, Bolivar notified La Torre by letter that hostilities should recommence at the expiration of 30 days. The Spaniards had taken a strong position at Carabobo, a village situated about halfway between San Carlos and Valencia; but La Torre, instead of uniting there all his forces, had concentrated only his First Division, 2,500 infantry and about 1,500 cavalry, while Bolivar had about 6,000 infantry, among them the British legion, mustering 1,100 men, and 3,000 *llaneros* on

horseback, under Paez. The enemy's position seemed so formidable to Bolivar, that he proposed to his council of war to make a new armistice, which, however, was rejected by his subalterns. At the head of a column mainly consisting of the British legion, Paez turned through a footpath the right wing of the enemy, after the successful execution of which manoeuvre, La Torre was the first of the Spaniards to run away, taking no rest till he reached Puerto Cabello, where he shut himself up with the remainder of his troops. Puerto Cabello itself must have surrendered on a quick advance of the victorious army, but Bolivar lost his time in exhibiting himself at Valencia and Caracas. On 21 September 1821, the strong fortress of Carthagena capitulated to Santander. The last feats of arms in Venezuela, the naval action at Maracaibo in August 1823 and the forced surrender of Puerto Cabello in July 1824, were both the work of Padilla. The Revolution of the Isla de Leon, which prevented O'Donnell's expedition from starting, and the assistance of the British legion, had, evidently, turned the scale in favour of the Colombians.

The Colombian Congress opened its sittings in January 1821 at Cucuta, and on 30 August published a new constitution, and after Bolivar had again pretended to resign, renewed his powers. Having signed the new constitution, he obtained leave to undertake the campaign of Quito (1822), to which province the Spaniards had retired after their ejection by a general rising of the people from the isthmus of Panama. This campaign, ending in the incorporation of Quito, Pasto, and Guayaquil into Colombia, was nominally led by Bolivar and General Sucre, but the few successes of the corps were entirely owed to British officers, such as Colonel Sands. During the campaigns of 1823–4, against the Spaniards in upper and lower Peru, he no longer thought it necessary to keep up the appearance of generalship, but leaving the whole military task to General Sucre, limited himself to triumphal entries, manifestos, and the proclamation of constitutions. Through his Colombian bodyguard, he swayed the votes of the Congress of Lima, which, on 10 February 1823, transferred to him the dictatorship, while he secured his re-election as President of Colombia by a new tender of resignation. His position had meanwhile become strengthened, what with the formal recognition of the new state on the part of England, what with Sucre's conquest of the provinces of upper Peru, which the latter united into an independent republic, under the name of Bolivia. Here, where Sucre's bayonets were supreme, Bolivar gave full scope to his propensities for arbitrary power, by introducing the 'Bolivian Code', an imitation of the *Code Napoléon*. It was his plan to transplant that code from Bolivia to Peru, and from Peru to Colombia, as to keep the former states in check by Colombian troops, and the latter by the foreign legion and Peruvian soldiers. By force, mingled with intrigue, he succeeded, indeed, for some weeks at least, in fastening his code upon Peru. The President and liberator of Colombia, the

protector and dictator of Peru, and the godfather of Bolivia, he had now reached the climax of his renown. But a serious antagonism had broken out in Colombia, between the Centralists or Bolivarists and the Federalists, under which latter name the enemies of military anarchy had coalesced with his military rivals. The Colombian Congress having, at his instigation, proposed an act of accusation against Paez, the Vice-President of Venezuela, the latter broke out into open revolt, secretly sustained and pushed on by Bolivar himself, who wanted insurrections, to furnish him a pretext for overthrowing the constitution and reassuming the dictatorship. Beside his bodyguard, he led, on his return from Peru, 1,800 Peruvians, ostensibly against the Federalist rebels. At Puerto Cabello, however, where he met Paez, he not only confirmed him in his command of Venezuela, and issued a proclamation of amnesty to all the rebels, but openly took their part and rebuked the friends of the constitution; and by decree at Bogota, on 23 November 1826, he assumed dictatorial powers.

In the year 1826, from which the decline of his power dates, he contrived to assemble a congress at Panama, with the ostensible object of establishing a new democratic international code. Plenipotentiaries came from Colombia, Brazil, La Plata, Bolivia, Mexico, Guatemala, and so on. What he really aimed at was the erection of the whole of South America into one federative republic, with himself as its dictator. While thus giving full scope to his dreams of attaching half a world to his name, his real power was rapidly slipping from his grasp. The Colombian troops in Peru, informed of his making arrangements for the introduction of the Bolivian code, promoted a violent insurrection. The Peruvians elected General Lamar as the President of their Republic, assisted the Bolivians in driving out the Colombian troops, and even waged a victorious war against Colombia, which ended in a treaty reducing the latter to its primitive limits, stipulating the equality of the two countries, and separating their debts. The Congress of Ocana, convoked by Bolivar, with a view to modify the constitution in favour of his arbitrary power, was opened on 2 March 1828 by an elaborate address, insisting on the necessity of new privileges for the executive. When, however, it became evident that the amended project of the constitution would come out of the Convention quite different from its original form, his friends vacated their seats, by which proceeding the body was left without a quorum, and thus became extinct. From a country-seat, some miles distant from Ocana, to which he had retreated, he published another manifesto, pretending to be incensed at the step taken by his own friends, but at the same time attacking the Convention, calling on the provinces to recur to extraordinary measures, and declaring that he was ready to submit to any load of power which might be heaped upon him. Under the pressure of his bayonets, popular assemblies at Caracas, Carthagena, and Bogota, to which latter place he had repaired, anew invested him with dictatorial power.

An attempt to assassinate him in his sleeping room at Bogota, which he escaped only by leaping in the dark from the balcony of the window and lying concealed under a bridge, allowed him for some time to introduce a sort of military terrorism. He did not, however, lay hands on Santander, although he had participated in the conspiracy, while he put to death General Padilla, whose guilt was not proved at all, but who, as a man of colour, was not able to resist.

Violent factions disturbing the Republic in 1829, in a new appeal to the citizens, Bolivar invited them to frankly express their wishes as to the modifications to be introduced into the constitution. An assembly of notables at Caracas answered by denouncing his ambition, laying bare the weakness of his administration, declaring the separation of Venezuela from Colombia, and placing Paez at the head of that Republic. The Senate of Colombia stood by Bolivar, but other insurrections broke out at different points. Having resigned for the fifth time, in January 1830, he again accepted the presidency, and left Bogota to wage war on Paez in the name of the Colombian Congress. Towards the end of March 1830, he advanced at the head of 8,000 men, took Caracuta, which had revolted, and then turned upon the province of Maracaibo, where Paez awaited him with 12,000 men, in a strong position. As soon as he became aware that Paez meant serious fighting, his courage collapsed. For a moment, he even thought to subject himself to Paez, and declare against the Congress; but the influence of his partisans at the Congress vanished, and he was forced to tender his resignation, notice being given to him that he must now stand by it, and that an annual pension would be granted to him on the condition of his departure for foreign countries. He accordingly sent his resignation to the Congress on 27 April 1830. But hoping to regain power by the influence of his partisans, and a reaction setting in against Joachim Mosquera, the new President of Colombia, he effected his retreat from Bogota in a very slow manner, and contrived, under a variety of pretexts, to prolong his sojourn at San Pedro, until the end of 1830, when he suddenly died.

The following is the portrait given of him by Ducoudray Holstein:

Simon Bolivar is five feet, four inches in height, his visage is long, his cheeks hollow, his complexion livid brown: his eyes are of a middle size, and sunk deep in his head, which is covered thinly with hair. His moustaches give him a dark and wild aspect, particularly when he is in a passion. His whole body is thin and meagre. He has the appearance of a man sixty-five years old. In walking, his arms are in continual motion. He cannot walk long, but becomes soon fatigued. He likes his hammock, where he sits or lolls. He gives way to sudden gusts of resentment, and becomes in a moment a madman, throws himself into his hammock, and utters curses and imprecations upon all around him. He likes to indulge in sarcasms upon absent persons, reads only

light French literature, is a bold rider, and passionately fond of waltzing. He is fond of hearing himself talk and giving toasts. In adversity, and destitute of aid from without, he is perfectly free from passion and violence of temper. He then becomes mild, patient, docile, and even submissive. In a great measure he conceals his faults under the politeness of a man educated in the so-called *beau monde*, possesses an almost Asiatic talent for dissimulation, and understands mankind better than the mass of his countrymen.

By decree of the Congress of New Granada, his remains were removed in 1842 to Caracas, and a monument erected there in his honour.

See *Histoire de Bolivar, par le Général Ducoudray Holstein; continuée jusqu'à sa mort par Alphonse Viollot* (Paris, 1831), *Memoirs of General John Miller (in the service of the Republic of Peru)*; Colonel Hippisley's 'Account of his journey to the Orinoco' (London, 1819).

Epilogue to the Second Edition

I

As we have repeatedly explained in this text, which we now publish in a second edition, my proposal for what might be called a 'contextual' reading – not of Marxism, but rather of Marx himself – was to piece together an adequate, or at least critical, perspective for answering the vexed question of the paradoxical place Latin America occupies in his thought, avoiding falling into abstraction or a merely ritualistic response. I say this because it is worth recalling that even at the time of the debate between Apristas and Marxists from the late 1920s onwards, it was clearly already necessary to put to the test that neat set of doctrines known as 'Marxism' – the 'Marxism' of the Third International, of course – through the prism of Latin America's *heterodoxy* with regard to Europe. It was precisely in these years that Marx's works on India and Engels's troubling comments on Mexico were exhumed by a movement that started to question its own identity and purpose.

Many years have passed since then; years pregnant with great convulsions and unprecedented transformations. The outcome has been the loss of the sense of a rising tide of history, which confidence in the future liberation of humanity had long been based on. Having once basked in the ideological glow of the Marxist vulgate – their apparent objectivity thus allowing them to undergo scientific scrutiny – the old certainties and beliefs have now crumbled. Today, they have little use in analysing the complexity of a world in which the actors seem to have swapped their roles.

The 'historical reason' that made Marxism – if I may again repeat, in spite of Marx – another nineteenth-century providentialism now challenged, we can see the reality of a world that I feel no need for us to justify, and both through ideological identity and even simply as a 'human being' I am inclined to view in terms of transformation and interpretation. I put the two categories in this order for a reason: I believe that the priority accorded to transformation coincides with the idea that inspired Marx in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, cryptically privileging the realisation of philosophy as a sort of conclusion to the whole history of Western thought. This did not stem from the belief that the transformation of the world does not require conceptualisation, but rather because this concept, if the transformation is to mean real human realisation, must be based on the deep connection between 'becomeness' and the 'not-yet', to use Ernst Bloch's terms.¹ The concept, then, must not pre-empt its determinations, as apparently occurred in Hegel, but rather express a 'real movement', whose direction of travel can only impose its own necessity to the extent that it is constituted as a radical critique of what exists, of what is immediately apparent and wraps itself up in a legitimising rationality.

Eroded by its worldly incarnation, crushed under the suffocating weight that the value-form bears down on the concrete labours of men, Marxism has been split between its holy and earthly instances, at the price of destroying the subversive power that Marx initially imbued it with. As an interpretation of history – and creator of it – it has proven to be less the 'subversion of praxis' than the science of legitimation, the logic of power, an ideological accessory. The crisis of socialism, which is also a crisis of the ideas and practice of the project of transformation, inevitably also poses an immediate challenge to its theoretical perspective. This perspective was a Marxism seen as a complete doctrine – or at least possible to complete with some subtle interpretative refinements – by those instances of the subaltern classes' movement who based themselves upon it. Converted into a state religion, Marxism seemed to have been reduced to the authoritarian and repressive ideology predominant across almost a third of our planet, or, in general terms, to be poor in theory but powerful as a political myth, by which it presented itself to the world as a will to fight to transform a divided and unjust society.

But do these – incontrovertible – truths give full account of the complexity of the phenomenon of 'Marxism'? If, ever since its creation as a theoretical edifice

1. See Bloch 1986, pp. 306–13. When Marx stated that 'the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it', he was telling us that all interpretation is only possible as transformation and that all transformation is interpretation. As we might say today, the territory of interpretation comprises everything, and everything can be conceived as language.

and motor of history, there have been constant attempts to reinterpret 'Marxism' in accordance with distinct experiences and circumstances, how far can we say that it has been imprisoned by a synthetic label expressing only *certain* forms of its realisation – however hegemonic they may be – and leaving aside *others*, which orthodoxy dismisses as 'heretical' and without whose determination the history of Marxism could be constructed as a universal history, at the cost of mutilating what is really proper to it, its practical-political substance? Just as the history of the Church is not identical to the history of Christianity and does not wholly define its boundaries, the history of Marxism is rather more than the vicissitudes of the vulgate and the 'deviations' from it. Apart from its specific history as an institution and as a dogma, the history of ideas and intellectuals, it is undeniable that it also has another discontinuous and decentred history, full of hidden expressions, lost paths and diverse temporalities; an esoteric and pluralist history expressing the multiplicity of initiatives, goals and results of the struggle waged by the subaltern classes. Though denied in the orthodoxy's ideal, chronological and rectilinear reconstruction of the past – and it remains an orthodoxy even if it is created by various political or theoretical strands clotting together – the history of Marxism must be pieced together in terms of its extremely divergent *national* instances. As such, it ceases to be a single history – even if admitting certain moments of fracture – but rather is transformed into the history of a 'plurality' of Marxisms. Only then can it be possible to reconstruct how and to what extent the theoretical work of Marx and those who followed some or all of his ideas, or were inspired by him, could have influenced² a given country at a particular historical moment. Similarly, to understand to what extent it was upheld by social forces and movements in their struggles and the elaboration of their ideologies, programmes and cultures; and what role it played in the constitution of socialism as an intellectual and political current.

This perspective, maintaining the essentials of Marxism, always privileges the diversity of realities, rhythms and temporalities in which these elements operated as the theoretical and practical forms of national phenomena. From this viewpoint, Marxism as something historical and worldly – and, in this sense, also as a 'finished' theory³ – must be seen in the secular history of its 'reconstructions' – and we might also say, 'productions' – that, as such, were something more than 'interpretations' owing to the genius of its theoretical exponents, however prominent. There is one further condition to this, however: in making it an object of investigation one must always hold firm to the radical interpretative principle established by Marx reminding us that the *subject* of this history is always elsewhere, in the 'real movement' whose vicissitudes Marxism was meant to be not

2. To use a word whose ambiguity and lack of precision I recognise.

3. As Althusser put it.

only the mirror-image of, but rather its theoretical scaffolding. Thus we can only put together a worthy history of Marxism (as opposed to a religious myth) if this is at the same time a history of the workers' movement, socialism and the social struggles that Marxism inspired.

What is the meaning, then, of describing the complex contradictions of this phenomenon with the reductive label 'crisis'? If, with such an expression, we wish to make reference to a radical break in the previous connections between the process of elaborating theory and the processes of reality, it ought to be remembered that there is never a linear relation between theory and movement, and the reconversion of theory into politics is a problematic field with contradictory outcomes. Though theory cannot be taken as set in stone, nor is it a spontaneous product of the historical process, and its relationship with the movement must necessarily be considered problematic, conflictual, ambiguous, riven with discontinuities and ruptures. It should also be said that only for very brief moments do theory and movement ever directly express one another or correspond. To speak of crisis, then, is an ideological, euphemistic and restrictive means of designating the difficulties that the socialist movement faces – both in theory and in practice – in confronting the absolute novelty of our times and projecting solutions sufficient to the problems posed in the world today. If Marxism – in the strong sense of the word – was not established claiming to be a totalising body of learning, able to produce knowledge all by itself, but only to offer formal cognitive criteria and political orientations for a struggle that emerges from objective conflicts; if its fundamental purpose was to serve as a critical organisation of knowledge and project of radical transformation – then is it possible to reduce it, without fear of distortion, to a mere 'philosophy of history', a moment of the Western *logos* that is now either obsolete or, at least, now undergoing an irreversible crisis? As such, to speak of a 'crisis of Marxism' – or equally, Marxists in crisis⁴ – only makes sense if we have previously decided that it is something it never claimed to be: a vision of the world able to embrace in method and theory the totality of difference from its privileged position, namely the Absolute.

I say '*never* claimed', knowing that this is an abuse of language, because if the Marxist vulgate – the pernicious, suffocating, sadly well-known 'Diamat' – was

4. We could recall Norberto Bobbio's sensible words: 'To conclude, I began speaking of the crisis of Marxism, as to adopt the current language; in reality, for someone like me, neither Marxist nor anti-Marxist, considering Marx a classic with whom one must engage just as with Hobbes or Hegel, there is not so much a crisis of Marxism as Marxists in crisis. Only a Marxist, insofar as he considers Marxism a universal doctrine, or an anti-Marxist, insofar as he believes that Marxism must be rejected from beginning to end, can properly say, whether with pain or pleasure, that Marxism is in crisis. The first, because he does not there find what he believed he could; the second, because proof of an error marks its fracture and its collapse.' His intervention is taken from AAVV 1982, pp. 76–83.

(and is) anything, it is a philosophy of the Absolute. But why confuse these terms? Marx is one thing, the Marxist movement quite another! It is impossible to summarise the extremely complex history of their relationship by flatly identifying the one with the other. It does not require a particularly sophisticated investigation to show a clear thread of continuity through Marx's thought, expressed in his radical critique of philosophy, political economy and politics, and there can be no doubt as to his repudiation of any attempt to convert his ideas into a system, and indeed his rejection of any statist ideology claiming a monopoly on truth. It can also be said, however, that vulgar Marxism – and not only that – would never have existed had it not been for Marx; that some among his perspectives, analyses and ideas contributed to its creation; that even when contradicting Marx, the Marxist movement advanced under his cover, concerned with questions that his critique pushed to centre-stage for our period. It is also true that Marx himself was sometimes this kind of 'Marxist'. But this does not mean that we have to change tack and accept indiscriminate analyses that fail to address the indivisible historical dimension of these questions. The Diamat, or, more generally, the 'Marxist' movement, deserves explanation: this is a necessity, because only thus may it perhaps be possible to destroy and recompose the cultural and ideological traditions that, formed on the concrete-historical terrain of the socialist movement, contributed to giving it an identity without which it would not have been able to achieve political autonomy, but now represent a dead-weight holding back its efforts to give theoretical and practical answers to the great questions of our time.

It is, therefore, possible to imagine that, just as more than a century ago it was necessary to engage in a critique of the 'German ideology' such that the socialist movement could find its way as a conscious social and political alternative to the logic and dominion of capitalism, today we need another such critique with regard to the 'Marxist ideology', in a new historical period marked by the crisis of the state and of the politics and general shape of the 'capitalist-centric' European intellect. But until such time as another Marx appears,⁵ I see no reason not to test

5. It should be clear from my reasoning that this condition is a purely rhetorical device. I do not believe in such a possibility, because I think that Marx marked the end of Western reason's attempt to embrace the whole diversity of reality in theory and method. But what about the deployment of the defining categories, 'totality', 'progress' and 'centrality', presupposed by such reason and which Marx – albeit not only him – stretched to breaking-point: are they *only* a matter of the past? It would be illusory to deny that modern-day debates on the question of the state and politics oblige us to critically examine the entire culture of the Left, but how can we embark on a new, more ambitious project without first having to measure it up against Marx? If the past continues to weigh on the present day and has a tendency to project itself into the future, how can we conceive of transition without considering all that Marx told us about the past and the present?

the critical potentialities of his thought in order to historicise the *iter* of a movement that formed an indivisible part of the modern world's exploited classes' thought and activity in their fight for a democratic reordering of social labour and of society as a whole. This is not a matter of nihilistically waving goodbye to a body of thought already frozen in aspic, nor initiating a bid to 'return' to some 'true' Marx that was always previously condemned to misunderstanding. Rather, it is to take all the means of analysis we have at hand – and to imagine excluding the world of Marxist categories from this is simply puerile – and analyse this confused phase of transition to a new phase of modernity, entailing as it does a radical change in the relations between the processes of class recomposition and the political and institutional changes also now underway.

II

Stripped of its propagandistic veneer and its uncritical exaltation of intuition, evading any possible critique – and, in fact, with its pretence of reducing the extreme complexity of history to a single idea, sharing in the same limitation it criticises – the polemic concerning the so-called 'crisis of Marxism' can be a path to new discoveries, to enter barely-explored terrain, and to more clearly define the weft of a social fabric in which the crisis of the state is linked to a more general crisis of rationality. As a metaphor for the conclusion of a whole period, the 'crisis of Marxism' can, therefore, be productive.

To say how it was born, through what stages it matured, is itself a first step towards saving it from empty ideological charlatanism, giving it purpose within a project of transformation. An effort to fuse Marxism with the enormous accumulation of modern thought could mean – East and West – a stage of growth and enrichment of its theoretical autonomy. Not out of some desire to seek legitimacy through dialogue with other cultures, nor to validate new totalising valences, but rather to nourish its critical potential with regard to the great question of modern democracy, for it to get back into the habit of a high level of intellectual development.⁶

In the history of thought, Marxism occupies an exceptional position because it is something more than a theory or way of thinking; it could attain that 'essential dimension of history'⁷ recognised by Heidegger because it is, above all, a *critique* of the concept of theory as a foundation of encyclopaedic projects or a meta-language of the specialised sciences. But to attain what no other modern

6. Auciello 1981, p. 9.

7. Heidegger 1978, p. 219.

philosophy ever could, it had to base its knowledge in ‘another element’,⁸ as Marx put it in his usual allegorical style, evoking the need for philosophy to turn its eyes to the world outside, the element of human activity itself considered as objective activity. Only there, in the critical-practical activity of man, is it possible to elucidate the problem of truth, or, in his own words, ‘the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice’. The sensuous world that appears in the everyday life of men, in their theoretical and scientific constructions, is not an object, or something that consciousness simply reflects, but always a product of global, historical practice. It is starting out from this key concept of social life as essentially practical that he can build a *materialist* conception of society. After all, if social life is essentially practical, all the phenomena of society must refer back to the social relations that men create in order to establish bonds amongst themselves and with nature. Furthermore, ‘All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice’. And within the notion of *sociality*, or *critical-practical activity*, or *practice*, lies the theoretical core of bringing together all the elements of social life – elements that, moreover, can be found at the basis of all its historically determinate forms. Marx’s idea, here, now appears so obvious that it is not even worth mentioning. However, his idea that consciousness is not a simple action of describing that which objectively exists, but rather the *construction* of a sensuously-experienced world structured by constant relations and regular processes, implies the establishment of a principle that cannot now be contradicted within philosophical discourse.

Although a relevant problem, the fact that this idea, which Marx shared with Nietzsche, could have attained ‘the most extreme possibility of philosophy’, as Heidegger put it,⁹ without managing to break with the metaphysical premises to which it remained tied, does not detract from the radicalism of what it proposed. After Marx and Nietzsche, philosophical thought could no longer proceed with abandon, but had to limit itself to ‘an epigonal renaissance and variations of that renaissance’.¹⁰ For a lay consciousness – and that is the perspective I intend to

8. ‘The division of the world is total only when its aspects are totalities. The world confronting a philosophy total in itself is therefore a world torn apart’. If after Hegel there could appear on the scene ‘attempts, most of them abysmally indigent’ it is because ‘half-hearted minds have opposite views to those of whole-minded generals. They believe that they can compensate losses by cutting the armed forces, by splitting them up, by a peace treaty with the real needs, whereas Themistocles, when Athens was threatened with destruction, tried to persuade the Athenians to abandon the city entirely and found a new Athens at sea, in another element’ (Marx 1975–2004n, pp. 491–2).

9. Heidegger 1978, p. 375.

10. Ibid. Marx and Nietzsche ‘remained, not only externally, attached to metaphysical premises; they completed metaphysics and in that way realised the absolute end of philosophy. In Nietzsche’s “reversed Platonism” and the “reversal of metaphysics” accomplished by Marx, Heidegger stresses “the most extreme possibility of history is attained”’

adopt – it is of little interest how close each of these men came to the brink of the new era that we are trying to envisage; whether epigones or heralds, they mark an unavoidable turning point in modern culture. Marx recalled that every great thinker condemns subsequent generations to explaining him, in one way or another – making him sacrosanct in spite of the questions that might be raised, or else dismissing him like some ‘dead dog’. Today, we remain in Marx’s orbit, working on the themes that he placed – whether resolving them or not – centre-stage for an entire historical period, the death-agony of which we are now witnessing, but without the new yet having been discovered amidst its conceptual determinations. What the concept teaches, history has already shown to be necessary, Hegel explained: ‘only in the maturity of reality does the ideal appear as counterpart to the real, apprehends the real world in its substance, and shapes it into an intellectual kingdom’.¹¹ In short, the truth of Marxism does not lie in the current impossibility of refuting one or another of its affirmations – something that will eventually occur – rather, the validity of Marxist theory derives from its role, with all this implies, as *the* existential judgement on a period of world history still yet to be concluded.¹²

This is the reason why my text, while accepting that Rosa Luxemburg’s manner of treating the problem of Marxism in terms of ‘stagnation’ and ‘advance’ is insufficient and open to dispute, nonetheless tried to reconstruct her reasoning, noting that it includes a criterion in which we share, namely that of the ‘epochal’ validity of Marx’s thought. In his Introduction, Carlos Franco identified, here, a certain interpretative ambiguity on my part, attributable – I think I understand correctly – to a conflict between ‘a liberated theoretical approach and an emotional resistance to any rupture’, which he found recurring throughout my work. It is possible that the text is itself ambiguous, but if we leave aside the presumption that this is a matter of repeated efforts to reaffirm my faith, it is possible to analyse it as the thematisation of a theoretical and practical knot that has still not been untied, namely the validity of Marx. This is a question that Franco

(Schmidt 1977). In his reversal of the ‘abstract metaphysics’ conceived by Hegelian idealism, Marx, then, formulated Hegel’s circle as the historical era of the bourgeoisie. This is the reason why Maximilien Rubel could say with such certainty that it is Hegel – the theorist of wars and the state – who is our true contemporary, the real winner in the twentieth century.

11. ‘Preface’ to Hegel 1967. As Tronti stresses, ‘the critical threshold lies exactly at the point where reality does not appear as what it is, but becomes what it is. We can only grasp it like this: not with the eyes of an exact science, but with the hands of a transformative practice’ (Tronti 1982, p. 52).

12. ‘What Marx recognized in a significant and essential sense, though derived from Hegel, as the estrangement of man has its roots in the homelessness of modern man... Because Marx by experiencing estrangement attains an essential dimension of history, the Marxist view of history is superior to that of other historical accounts’ (Heidegger 1978, p. 219).

himself poses when he says that he believes it possible still today to turn Marx 'into the active catalyst for new and creative theoretical advances'. In reality, such a work of reconstruction is only possible if we in some way accept, in its fundamental motivations, the question Rosa Luxemburg sought to answer in the early twentieth century, when a different debate on the dissolution of Marxism jeopardised the workers' movement and European thought. Since reality has not yet been able to exhaust the potential of a thought in *anticipation* of the needs of its time, Marx continues to speak to our contemporaries.

Conceiving Marxism as a 'finished' theory, and thus a 'limited' one – to use Althusser's expressions – is itself a means of shifting reasoning from the level of faith onto that of critique. This is for the simple reason that its validity ceases to be based on a metaphysical 'philosophy of history' totalising the past, present and future of humanity, and is, instead, inscribed – I would say, *exclusively* so – at the level of claiming to give account of the reality of the capitalist mode of production; of a dialectical movement towards the ever more crushing preponderance of exchange-value over use-value; and of the subsumption to it of the working class and all society, as a mere abstract labour power. This is perhaps the essence of Marx's paradigm, his identification – in terms of the dialectic of society – of the dual character of the commodity and the labour-force, as exchange-value and use-value, respectively; here we find the scientific foundation of the *critique* of political economy. Recognising this dialectic as fundamental to the contradictions of modern society, and without passing judgement on the theoretical dimension that this discovery might acquire when he turned back to the past, Marx could thus pose his epochal-historical perspective of the liberation of social labour from its 'commodified' form. The restoration of old forms of sociality and the construction of new ones, or, to put it another way, overcoming alienation, was *possible* – we would not today, as in days gone by, say *necessary* – because capitalist development could only take place by means of an unprecedented reproduction of its own contradictions, thus unleashing a vast array of conflicts and subjectivities. Marx's greatness, or at least one among others, lay in the fact that he identified the essential determinations of an entire historical period in which the spread of the value-form would reach its own logical conclusion. In the *Grundrisse*, at a time when international capitalist expansion had barely begun, he foresaw that fully-developed automatised production would make science a direct productive power, turning the expropriation of alienated labour – on the basis of which modern society existed – into too narrow a condition of production. Producing commodities would thus be rendered superfluous as a basis for production. Marx's groundbreaking prediction, here, shows us his genius, his exceptional analytical capacity to see reality as it is, what already exists in potential within this object known as 'the commodity'. But this by no means obliges us

to justify Marx's conceptual framework now and for always, faced as we are with all the complexity of the subsequent transformations of capitalist society. The antithesis he discovered between the development of the general productivity of society and the reduction of the working day lay the basis for conceiving a *political* form of crisis, which in the conditions of present-day societies is expressed in the unleashing of the productive forces, refusing to be constrained by the working day. His historical prediction as to the exhaustion of the classical model of reproducing capital today appears before us as an incontrovertible reality, with the crisis of the 'welfare-state'. As someone recently aptly commented:

his combined analysis of the phenomena of overproduction and of the contradictory character of the dominion of the working day; his fundamental image of crisis as 'the forcible establishment of unity between elements that have become independent and the enforced separation from one another of elements which are essentially one'; and his schema of a 'deductive' relationship between development and crisis and the consequent emergence of a 'limit' to the constant formalisation of labour – together these define the boundaries of our most lasting acquisitions from Marx.

But the impossibility of reducing the full diversity of Marx's analytical tools to the terms used in *Capital* derives precisely from the fact that his theory of crisis simultaneously served to herald the exhaustion of a certain 'political' form of capitalist domination, and the onset of a new period; to put an end to any linear model of class relations; and to identify a new perspective for the development of politics.¹³ Considered as a moment of transition whereby a new continent of politics and theory, new forms of reproduction, became possible, Marx's critique can be seen in all its *modern* significance. But this is on condition that we recognise the consequences that this entailed for his theoretical system itself, and note the existence of frontiers that must be mapped out in order that they might be transgressed. Since it is not possible to restrict the history of political antagonism to the development of its state-institutional cycles, trying to reduce it to some 'economic' essence would imply setting down a theoretical axiom hemming in Marxism, ultimately denying it any capacity to represent particular forms of transition. This would merely be a means of resolving 'in the negative' the objective elements of the crisis of Marx's theoretical system, which have been brought about by the crisis of the state and politics in modern society.

It is necessary to understand that, under present conditions, the radical modification of the forms of reproduction entails changes in the various classes' political status, and that through such changes an entire, long-lasting stage of modern

13. Auciello 1981, p. 47; see the full chapter 'Sviluppo, socializzazione e forma "politica" della crisi in Marx' (pp. 11–47), which develops the line of argument here presented.

politics has been set in crisis. What was once the property and monopoly of the major classes, amidst the acute exasperation of social and international conflicts now struggles in a confused manner to extend itself and to embrace a multiplicity of social subjects who have proven irreducible to the traditional forms of tutelage exercised by the prevalent institutional structures. It is this extreme complexity of the present-day social struggles – which we suffer, more than understand – that urgently demands new theoretical and political forms as to penetrate its structure. Occupying the terrain of Marx's fundamental outlook – that is to say, being 'within' it – today requires going 'beyond' him. Perhaps for many this formulation will sound rather ambiguous; perhaps it is trying to dress up in fine words what Franco called the 'intolerance of ambiguity', referring to Marx's view of Latin America. But even if we accept that something similar exists within my own mindset, I refuse to believe that the leftist milieu's devotion of so much energy to trying to achieve some overall vision of the contradictory character of modern society is solely – or even mainly – due to its rejection of the new, or some fear of anything that challenges the coordinates according to which we understand reality. I firmly believe that we are undergoing *something more* than a theoretical crisis, and that the agony of 'modern' society – I say 'modern', over and above distinctions between the Three Worlds – drags along with it any of Theory or Philosophy's pretensions to reduce the real to a system, a coherent unity, comprising the totality of its vicissitudes. In the context of the unprecedented complexity of modernity, as well as the transformations of the shape the productive forces historically assumed in their organic relationship with the 'formal determination' of capital, the already-ongoing development of Marx's dual schema into a plural and complex one cannot be sought out in the collateral, autonomous existence of the social forms and functions of value production; rather, it is grounded in the crisis and dissolution of the law of value itself, starting with its totalising spread throughout the entire social body. Crises, catastrophes – to use a now-current expression – are born precisely at these Pillars of Hercules capital now reaches, which Marx so lucidly foresaw in his analysis of its 'limits' and 'barriers'.¹⁴ The commodity, the objectification of a social relation, explodes, and the constitutive-genetic exchange between labour power and capital is torn asunder. The commodity ceases to be a real synthesis (reality such as it is, the reality of the capitalist world, as Marx identified as the starting point of his analysis in the first volume of *Capital*) and labour power becomes free living labour. Capitalist dominion, then, would have to re-establish its power on another footing, *outside* of the 'economic' relation represented by

14. See Marx 1973, pp. 415–19; 702–6. Also see, specifically devoted to this theme, 'The Historical Limits of the Law of Value: Marx on the Subject of Socialist Society', Chapter Twenty-Eight of Rosdolsky 1989 (pp. 413sq.).

capital, but the 'crisis of governance' entailed in such a period would reveal the insuperable obstacles posed by the non-assimilability of subjectivities separate from the social in this systemic synthesis. I say 'insuperable' because the rupture with the old contract that this irrepressible outburst of subjectivity would entail – in terms of the crisis of the state- and party-form¹⁵ – could not just be sutured by periodically revitalising the rule of law now facing extinction. One of the actors of the Hobbesian 'war of all against all' now developing on the world-stage is the materiality of a subject – diverse, multiple, contradictory within itself, and as such irreducible to the utopian dream of a privileged standpoint from which to dictate to the world – for which communism does not appear as the end-point, but rather a possible contingency. But insofar as this is only a possible contingency, the existence of other actors confronts us with the mortifying spectre of catastrophe. The poverty of present-day theory thus cannot be explained on its own terms, or at least *only* on its own terms, but more fundamentally in the tenacious resistance of the real world, of the differentiated world of social antagonism, to this 'approximation to the concept' of which Marx spoke, through which we might interpret its concrete morphology not as a *known* but rather as a *cognisable* terrain of forces (even if not one we can *synthesise*). I ask myself, however, to what point can we carry out a radical reformulation of the theories and practices of transformation without returning to the analyses, traditions and theoretical conceptualisations that we have at hand already? It is true, to take the image Béjar invokes, that 'it's cold outside'; or, to put it another way, that Marxists (only them?) are reluctant to recognise the old mole wearily working away up against the elements, continuing to burrow at the world's foundations and eat away at the continuity of history. It is not worth us sitting looking out of the window in an attempt to observe its subterranean movements, or to try to reproduce the labyrinthine path of its progress. We must *go outside*, such that the reality of the other, the different, can challenge our certainties. But does

15. Crisis in the 'state'-form in the sense of the 'state' part of political systems losing weight relative to the other parts of these same systems. 'The state as a machine, as an apparatus, not only of dominion but also of administration, not only as a governing strata but also as a body of functionaries, both command and execution, decision as well as bureaucracy, Schmitt as well as Weber: this state-form is in general crisis' (Tronti 1982, p. 54). And this crisis is accompanied, in a parallel and converging manner, by a general crisis of the political party. The critical moment that the historical fact of mass organisation is today passing through, according to Tronti, derives from the fact that the party and the state have 'lost their monopoly on politics'. The mounting subjectivity created by both capitalism and socialism in recent decades – very sharply expressed in 1968 – does not appear possible to integrate by means of the mechanisms of the West's often highly conflictual societies, nor strongly ideologically-framed systems such as exist in the lands of 'actually-existing socialism'. The fact that this tendency towards the crisis of the state-form in present-day political systems expresses itself in the most varied ways cannot mask the acuteness of this process, now termed 'ungovernability'.

facing up to the different necessarily imply destroying the place we started out from? Do we not then run the risk of disarming our organisations and weakening our side of the balance of forces, rushing ahead under the illusion that anything is possible if only we abandon our central principles?¹⁶ As such, we can understand why the dilemma of whether or not to disinter Marxism is a false alternative, another mental trap that misses the real question of the ambiguous character of subjectivity in the modern day.

The crisis of Marxist ‘historical reason’ – although not only this, given that, as we have already seen, it is also the heir of a whole culture determining its assumptions and limits; the crisis of the mythical idea of a homogenous and continuous progress flowing into communism: these crises turn us back to the secular reality of a world that does not have some ‘guaranteed’ destiny or happy future, unless men are able to conquer it for themselves; it does not have any singular direction, if not that imposed by the reproduction of a system that entails the destruction of the very meaning of humanity. In vain would we attempt to deny the importance – I would say, transcendental importance – of the secularising effect present reality and the modern intellect are having on Marx’s thought and Marxism. Only such a course can allow – as it is today already – the lines of demarcation between Marxism and other forms of social inquiry and political emancipation, deriving from distinct traditions, to lose the rigidity that the *Miserabilismus* of the orthodox Marxist vulgate managed to impose for almost a century. Safely brought back down from the skies of metaphysics, a secularisation of Marxism can allow its essential critical character to return in all its force. *Critique*: not the elaboration of definitive conceptual apparatuses, nor the inexorable march towards Science, but our central means of advance, not only subjecting its contemporaries and the current state of things to radical critique, but also and at the same time subjecting itself to critique. This is the sense in which Marx spoke of *Selbstverständigung*, intelligence of oneself and of the world and the manner in which critique must proceed.

The possibility of measuring up to bourgeois high culture, the ‘negative thought’ which through Nietzsche and Weber subjected the modern state’s pretensions to create totalising hegemonic instances to devastating, irreversible critique – without which it would be impossible to anchor the central axes of the debate as to the current meaning of the critique of the state and politics – depends on leftist culture’s capacity to privilege the *critical* character of Marx’s thought.

16. See Tronti 1982, p. 53. It is true that there are moments of ‘conclusion’ to a whole historical period, cases where it would be pointless to look back to the past for answers to present-day challenges. But still, as someone once reminded us, however difficult being our own heirs may be, we have no choice but to measure ourselves up against the past and the present in order to project the future.

In doing so, Marxism has no need to obsessively search for its identity by recreating a vision of the world conceived in terms of rivalling and marginalising modern culture, or an empiricist admission of complexity, or even a reconstruction that converts it into a sort of immanent truth of the multiplicity of ‘conjunctures’, such as Cacciari sharply argues.¹⁷ But negated as a *system*, and thus as a totalising method and theory of reality, Marxism seems to *dissolve*, which, from my perspective, is in truth nothing other than the means of its ‘realisation’, to use Marx’s expression. Its ‘earthly realisation’ today effectively means restoring the ties that link Marxism to modern culture and ‘delimit’ it as the *critical perspective* that this entails, an irrepressible dimension of the world’s contradictory character.

III

It was all of these concerns – perhaps rather more clearly expressed in this Epilogue than at the moment I composed my essay – that led me to consider the unviability of ‘Eurocentrism’ as an explanation for the evasion or omission (or, if you like, undervaluation) of Latin America in Marx’s *oeuvre*. For me, the question is of interest not at the level of history or philology, but rather as an essentially theoretical and political matter. I say this on the basis that Marx’s fallacy had serious consequences for the theoretical fate of our continent in the socialist tradition. It is, therefore, a matter of identifying a difficulty present within Marx himself, and not merely to once again confirm him as one of the clearest, most fundamental examples of the unintelligibility of Latin America in European minds. I believe that this is, at root, a false paradigm, or at least an ideological and inadequate form of addressing questions that are posed to the identity of any human community when historical processes take it out of its natural comfort-zone. If identity can only be defined as opposition to the other, to the different and distinct, then the question as to the specific nature of each people always returns to a comparative paradigm, which by its very nature is a hypothetical one. The elucidation of the historical character of Latin-American societies could thus only be achieved through the prism of Europe, at the point where the similarities and differences acquire conceptualisable contours. Among many other reasons, because European thought was, in our continent, a never-questioned, universal presupposition for any type of reflection attempting to

17. See Cacciari 1977, p. 25. I refer to ‘conjunctures’ in the sense of a multiplicity of projects and functions, of bodies that develop and transform languages themselves in order to affirm their will to power. It is this conflictual universe, as a space of confrontation between the diverse projects that constitute it, that Cacciari calls *Technique*. See, on this theme, his book *Krisis* (Cacciari 1976).

rationally systematise the nature and defining characteristics of our region and each of its national expressions. This was, furthermore, without doubt the reason why one of the great minds most alert to the problem emphasised, in the words of an exceptional work, that 'there can be no salvation for Indo-America without European and Western science and thought'.¹⁸ At root – and even if this is not always clearly explicit – the discussion on our identity is nothing other than the theoretical aspect and ideological transfiguration of a question of an essentially political character: what really interests us is not what we are, but what we should be.

I did not propose, then, to write a text on a particular episode in the history of ideas, but rather to effect a 'problematic' reconstruction of the manner in which Marx addressed realities that he had to confront in order to fit together the great phenomena of international politics. In other words, my intention was to see how certain of Marx's own analyses, theories and traditions functioned, in order to try to go further than him and address the question of why socialism could not constitute itself into a real alternative to the concrete forms that the processes of state-construction and the 'nationalisation' of the masses adopted in our continent. Since I reject the idea that Marxism or socialism are structurally alien to the continent – which, for unknown reasons, has shied away from the political and social movements arising from modern society – I firmly believe that the so far insuperable obstacles to socialism becoming a significant, lasting current of ideas are the same as those that have impeded the realisation of truly democratic processes and the establishment of durable democracies in Latin America. The *fin de siècle* question as to the 'prospects of the Latin-American democracies' has today become an investigation as to the reasons for their failure.

In a recent essay, Octavio Paz stressed the extent to which those people who try to respond to Eurocentrism – in truth, he used the word 'ethnocentrism', but the terms are equivalent – by appealing to concepts such as 'underdevelopment', which represent value-judgements rather than descriptions, in fact collapse into using its imaginary. This insistence on explaining the ills of one part of the world – condemned to disorder and tyranny, anarchic violence and despotism – in terms of the 'absence' of the economic structures and class-formations that allow for democracy in Europe and the United States, is nothing but a subverted – and thus ideological – form of conceiving our societies as part of a world-reality inexorably destined to follow Europe's path. Adopting a position recognising the permanent tension between what is and must be – or, to put it another way, between a past and present that must be eschewed and a future that must be realised – such interpretations constitute an ideological, mythical

18. Mariátegui 1977, p. 12.

framework that, whether implicitly or explicitly, proposes to seek out forces that have supposedly been undervalued, or at least not yet used. At the heart of these ideologies of 'absence' is the certainty that capitalism, as a form of civilisation, is always able to overcome historically determined situations, a transcendent totality that can gradually absorb tensions and conflicts, the course of its realisation transforming antagonisms into means of its own reinforcement.

No-one can deny that the differences on which these ideologies have been and continue to be based are well-known, evident and even measurable, but we cannot deduce from this the idea – in 'its dirty-judaical manifestation',¹⁹ as Marx put it – that democracy is only the result of the social and economic conditions particular to capitalism and the Industrial Revolution. If, as Paz notes, recalling Castoriadis, 'democracy is a real political *creation*, meaning, a combination of ideas, institutions and practices that constitute a collective invention'; if, as the foundation of modern civilisation, it is essentially a 'creation of the people';²⁰ then the explanation of its agonised attempts to establish itself in the Latin-American context requires that we do much more than dissect this particular problem, if we are to identify its 'causes' of whatever kind. But even if we accept a way of reasoning that presupposes a notion of historical periodisation, today indefensible; if we conceive of democracy not as a superstructure of capitalism, but as a creation of the people; then it is clear that our analysis must be devoted to morphologically reconstructing – and why would it not be more accurate to say, 'constructing'? – the diverse and intertwined levels that structures comprise. But what is really of interest is the manner in which these structures intersect with the social fabric, and not to reveal particular attributes this or that structure is granted by a fatalist interpretation of history. And in this sense, there is fundamental importance in Paz's essay's stress on two dimensions of Latin-American reality that economistic reductionism has tended to evade: firstly, the still-not overcome obstacles that the creation of a critical, modern intellectual current must confront, and secondly, 'the inertia and passivity, this immense mass of opinions, habits, beliefs, routines, convictions, inherited ideas and behaviours that form peoples' traditions'.²¹

19. [A quote from the *Theses on Feuerbach* – DB.]

20. Paz 1982, p. 41.

21. Paz 1982. Indeed, what is the socialist movement, if not the combination of these two dimensions? We might recall Gramsci's words when he synthesised the role of socialism with two fundamental points: 'the formation of a national-popular collective will of which the modern Prince is at the same time the organiser and active working expression'. The socialist movement must take the place occupied in the consciousness of the popular masses by divinity or the categorical imperative, and in this sense transform itself into the basis of a modern secularism and a complete secularisation 'of the whole of life and of all customary relations'. As a foundation of modern civilisation, what is democracy if not the secularisation of power?

It is clear that the two dimensions are closely related to one another. Only a deep 'moral and intellectual reform' in the Gramscian sense can break the binds of inertia that hold the masses in passivity; but for this to happen, there needs to be a transformative élite, whose own existence is in turn dependent upon the masses joining together. If this mechanism of reciprocal sustenance is absent or broken, culture, as the product of human actions, will be reduced to a neutralising 'expression' of them, and the public mood will remain anchored in authoritarian traditionalism. Latin-American democracy became ensnared in this unresolved Gordian knot, but this same problem also provided the backdrop for the deformity and impotence of socialism. Since I am convinced that democracy and socialism in Latin America are two dimensions of one same process, I insist that a contextual reading of Marx – not only him, of course – can offer us political and theoretical elements not only useful for helping us understand the historical development of Marxism, but also for problematising the extent to which the theoretical form that it adopted in our continent clarifies a more fundamental, structuring limitation of the American intellect in bringing together life and knowledge, or, to use Simmel's words, for ideas to sink roots in the ground. If this is so, the analysis of the vicissitudes Marxism underwent in its efforts to become the theoretical form of the process of the masses' constitution as political subjects helps us to understand these inner contours of national formations, these convoluted, asynchronous, dark, deformed, anomalous phenomena, always present in the societies' histories, and which the constant convulsion and crisis in the weak Latin-American republics drag along with a force rare for the region.²²

IV

To clarify the Marxist stance that I am taking and the more general motivations behind my essay,²³ as I have so far been trying, has the sole scope of defining more clearly the itinerary of a circumnavigation of certain core themes. The text – and the critical analyses in response to it – do not answer these themes conclusively, but rather site them on more fertile ground for their future elaboration. However, I must confess that such analyses,²⁴ notwithstanding the valid objections and wise and precise reasoning to be found in them, opening new

22. Is it not time for Left-culture to show the same sensitivity to these supposedly 'anomalous' phenomena as 'reactionary' intellectuals always did? From this perspective, it is of great importance to genuinely critically reread the whole of conservative Latin-American thought, which, I would dare to suggest, was more clearly able to see the shadows cast by our societies.

23. I use the word 'essay' for reasons I will go on to.

24. Franco, Terán and De Ípola 1981; Franco 1981; Filippi 1982.

perspectives for research, have only aggravated a feeling that I could never shake off when I was composing my work. I asked myself – as I still do now – whether Marx’s ‘blindness’ towards our reality can be read in exclusively or mainly *theoretical* terms, meaning, on the basis of the contradiction that arises between an abstract theoretical model and a situation irreducible to its essential parameters. The question is an important one because if we answer in the affirmative, we can only agree with Franco’s conclusion – and not only his – that ‘the fact that Marx did not perceive the “regularities” of Latin-American reality cannot be explained by saying that these did not exist, but rather by the perspective from which he analysed them’. Such a perspective was the result of Marx’s adherence to ‘the particular shape that the relationship between nation and state took on in Europe’, inevitably colouring ‘his conception of politics, the state, classes, and, in reality, the innermost contours of the processes of history’. Marx’s ‘Eurocentric’ perspective was thus the inevitable consequence of his conception, his system of thought.

I tend to think that a reasoning structured in the way Franco’s is, though valid for explaining the main lines of Marx’s discourse on Latin-American reality, ends up making Marx its prisoner. This is what I think to be worth questioning. Not out of the belief that there is some ‘true’ Marx who must be saved at all costs from his followers’ falsifications, but rather because any analysis based exclusively on the restrictive role of ‘categorical frameworks’ in his thought, determining his outlook, obscures – even if unintentionally – a more relevant problem: that Marx’s work is *not a system*.²⁵ Moreover, the need it poses to identify the limitations of his thought; all the fissures where his pretence of accounting for the forbidding mass of socio-historical developments – and they are not only resistant to *theory*, of course – rebounds on his own parameters, challenging and redefining them. This is why I believe that working *within* Marx always obliges us to criticise everything in him impelling him to be a ‘Marxist’, as frequently occurred. I do not deny that such an observation could also be applied to my

25. See Del Barco 1982, a detailed and significant exposition of the importance a reading considering the ‘fragmentary’ character of his work can have for ‘reinterpreting’ Marx. For Del Barco, the fact that he always left his manuscripts incomplete is not the result of the author’s lack of creativity nor a lack of time due to an overload of political tasks: ‘rather, it is a matter of a complete change in the *object* of Marx’s studies, and, consequently, the perspective of his theoretical focus. On account of factors . . . constituting what is *different* in the capitalist system, shifting the centre of his whole interpretative and theoretical apparatus, the *object* lost its translucency and tangibility, in such a manner that any analysis claiming to give account of it could not present itself as a theoretical whole, but rather was restricted to a molecular, genealogical discourse . . . this *knowledge*, in the strict sense of the word, suggests a reality which it is only possible to approach by means of the remnants, fractures, slips, fallacies and excesses of what for so much time, at least on the historical stage, was believed to be a coherent set of laws, a pure objectivity structured by the canon of Reason’ (pp. 13–14).

own text: reading it again two years later gives well-founded reasons for this concern – or rather, dissatisfaction – with which I have always been troubled. But since what is important, here, is not to justify the already-written, but rather to examine the means of advance for critique, to stress the non-systemic character of Marx's thought means that we cannot limit ourselves to dissecting his 'theoretical' limitations, but furthermore to fully admit his essential ambiguity.

But in what sense do I believe that a reasoning based on privileging limitations of a theoretical character obscures rather than clarifies matters? Since, for now, I cannot extend myself to considering themes that awake more questions than answers in my mind, I will limit myself to simply advancing some observations that it would be worth continuing to debate. Let us take those concerned with the value of establishing rigid criteria for a periodisation of Marx's *oeuvre*, from which one might base an analysis in terms of a 'paradigm shift', and which relates to the character of his 'Eurocentrism'.

Undoubtedly, my text shares with Franco's – I refer to his specifically because they most clearly and categorically draw out some of my analyses to their full conclusions – an exaggerated emphasis on certain changes in Marx's thought after the failure of the European Revolution of 1848. To designate such changes we have used strong expressions like 'radical turn', 'mutation', 'breaking point', 'overcoming', 'change' and even 'paradigm shift', serving the purpose of a vehement assault on the conviction that there is some rectilinear continuity in Marx's discourse. But how far is it really true to say that these changes mark real 'ruptures'? And if it is not, to what extent does this affect the fundamental hypotheses we have formulated? I do not believe that such a contested concept such as a 'paradigm' can account for the diversity of levels and multiple discourses framing a thought so strongly stimulated by politics, or, to put it another way, by positions and value-judgements generally not based in 'theory'. Even a supposedly tentative acceptance of the notion of a paradigm in order to clarify the meaning and limits of the shift in Marx's perspective on historical events is only possible on condition that we convert his thought into a *science* (as it is commonly understood) and not a *critique* whose elaboration, as such, does not require an ontologisation of nature and the social. *But if we do so, it becomes highly questionable whether Marx did indeed carry out such a paradigm shift at some point.*

If Marx's thought is seen from the perspective of its having been constituted systematically, the paradigm we are left with is an abstract-theoretical model built on the basis of a dualist societal schema, adequate to effectively capturing the genetic moment of 'Christian-bourgeois-capitalist' society and the consequent historical identification of production with the working class, on the one hand, and the bourgeoisie, on the other. Marx's analysis in his essential theoretical works was thus posed in terms of the unification of the world under capitalist

relations, given their tendency towards universalisation. The explanatory power of *Capital* tends to make all history gravitate around (or serve as a precedent to) this capitalist relation, with the objective of grounding its historical, inevitable completion and overcoming. The centrality of the working class – in turn, a central moment of this Marxian paradigm – derives from its condition as the exclusive bearer of productive labour, to the extent that it is identified with and entirely comprised by commodity-production. The perspective of the suppression of capitalism, the result of the organisational and revolutionary capacity of the proletariat as the historical agent of transformation, is the framework that determines, in the last instance, the conjunctural alternatives favouring this or that historical process. The fact that Marx then considered it useful – or even, in some aspects, necessary – to concern himself scientifically and politically with other socio-economic formations in order to construct, complete and verify such a model,

does not affect the self-sufficient, self-orienting, self-‘centred’, so to speak, nature... of the whole process of shaping bourgeois capitalism, which, in *this* sense, must necessarily be called *European*; but even then it referred (at least up to Marx’s time) only to those particular areas of Europe where the abstraction... had been realised or was on the way to completing its dominion.²⁶

I do not believe that Filippi’s apt points, here, are open to dispute, but it is perhaps worth dwelling on them in order to demonstrate how they confront us with one of the problematic knots to which I earlier referred and which we ought to reflect on. Because it was precisely at the time of his London exile, when he began his most productive period devoted to the critique of political economy with the *Grundrisse*, that Marx addressed the problems of international politics and diplomatic history with most skill and dedication. What I want to pick out, here, is that at the same stage of his life as he was composing the texts traditionally considered the epitome of historical materialism, he was simultaneously mounting an analysis of the great themes of international politics, in which he paradoxically *did not follow* the interpretative criteria that he ought to have derived from this. In what sense was he evading or distorting them? In the sense that ‘politics’ tended to be seen not as a linear expression of a balance of forces established within ‘economics’, in the sphere of production, but as an autonomous site of resistance against the revolutionary dynamism of civil society. If in his youth his reflection was turned towards trying to offer a response to the problem of politics becoming autonomous – as an essential characteristic of the process of the modern centralised state constituting itself; if he conceived the continuity of revolution as the expulsion of the category of politics from civil society; then

26. Filippi 1982.

the vicissitudes of revolution and the defeat of 1849 allowed the weight of politics to emerge in all its force. The exhaustion of the revolution showed the solidity of the bloc of forces favouring conservation, maintaining the European balance that had been in place since before the French Revolution. Assuming the role of a partisan observer of capitalism's spread across the world, his analysis of the prevalent productive process allowed him to critically analyse the character of the forces sustaining such an order and those both within and outside it leading the advance of the modern world. However, the *anomaly* in Marx resulted from the fact that, once he had turned to this great arena of international politics, Marx's indisputable confidence in the determining role of the productive forces was challenged by the resistance put up by 'political' developments, the relations of force between states. The all-consuming energy of the productive forces met with forms of neutralisation, or obstacles that rendered its advance painfully slow, in the dense social fabric upholding the powers able to intervene with destructive force in the world-context. The 'age of capital' was clearly distinct and not superimposed on 'the age of societies'; as such, an explanation of the slow pace and complexity of the spread of the capitalist mode of production had to be located on the terrain of politics and international relations.

It is true that Marx considered those forces opposed to this capitalist development a negative factor. Among his deepest convictions was the idea that the movement of human emancipation would arise from within civil society and that 'politics' and the 'state' represented obstacles that impossibilised or delayed the forces of progress bursting onto the historical stage. For social and economic emancipation to be able to take forward steps – and this is his meaning of 'progress' – it was necessarily to simplify, 'modernise' or, if you like, rationalise the international context. Such was, in sum, his proposal, his governing principle, from which he analysed this context, trying to lay down guidelines for a socialist movement that was, at that time, less real than imaginary. But what I want to emphasise, here, is that by terming politics and the state into obstacles, Marx subverted the supposed relation of base determining superstructure in his examination of certain 'national' cases: Ireland, Poland, Spain, Russia, and so on. Here, we face an undeciphered paradox: there is a Marx who in the years subsequent to the 1848 Revolution dedicated his 'theoretical' concerns to constructing an abstract-theoretical model at the same time determining the law of movement of capitalist society and mounting a radical critique of its existence. In this 'model', the critique of politics emanated directly from the critique of political economy, and as such there was no space for a positive theory and analysis of the institutional forms and the functions of politics. It could be said that, in the last instance, this model or system necessarily implied portraying politics as a simple (superstructural) stage on which class-realities played out. As I note in

my text, the refusal to ascribe any productivity to the state-sphere itself was an inevitable consequence of the means by which Marx's system was constituted, expressed in works such as the *Grundrisse*, the 1859 'Preface' to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* and *Capital*.

But – and here comes the paradox – in these same years, 'in his concrete analyses – Marx privileged the autonomy of politics to such a point that he could analyse Russo-Mongol Asiaticism, for example, only in terms of its expressive, political elements.²⁷ Just as he saw civil society as having great power to propagate itself, disrupting the existing state of things, he ascribed politics and diplomacy, concentrated in the state, the role of impeding civil society and suffocating its revolutionary potentials, which as such enjoyed a substantial autonomous place in his thought. He often saw politics as the autonomous site of resistance against the dynamism of civil society.²⁸ In my essay, I make clear that this privileging of the 'political' character of certain situations – always present in Marx – belongs better to the 'points of departure' from his system, rather than something that can be deduced from his system itself. I believe that there is sufficient evidence to back up this statement, but I am concerned that this

27. See, for example, his *Revelations of the Diplomatic History of the 18th Century*. This almost totally unknown text by Marx alone demonstrates how far a parallel reading can place caveats on, or at least condition and define the limits, of the overall value of certain universally-accepted claims, ones that my own book also shares in. For example, on page xxx I contend that 'the rejection of the state as a centre of production of civil society' was 'a foundational principle of his thought'. Here I cite his questioning of Hegel's conception of the state's role in producing civil society, but I could have cited many other texts along the same lines. Because this principle is fundamental to his reasoning, Marxism always had great difficulties in explaining dictatorial power. When, as in the case of Napoleon III, the state did not appear to be dominated by any given class, this was represented as the result of a 'transitory' situation in the balance of forces between the classes, allowing for a momentary growth in the 'autonomy of the executive'. It is this particular situation that Marx describes in his historical-political writings like *The Class Struggles in France 1848 to 1850* and the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. But what remained unexplained was the fact that, once established, the dictatorial state was always in condition to pursue an independent policy, because in reality it had become a power in itself. This – and here, his 'paradox' reappears – is what Marx cast light on in detailed or even exaggerated form in his *Revelations*, composed as we know, at the same time as his articles on the revolution in Spain and on Bolivar.

28. Although there are various 'Marxist' theories of politics, Marx did not construct a theory of politics. As Bongiovanni stresses, what exists, in reality, is a Marxian *critique* of politics, 'When Marx adopted political categories *in a positive sense* he did not re-elaborate them (which would have been impossible) but rather borrowed them from the great revolutionary and democratic traditions that preceded his time . . . But in his analysis the categories of "politics" and even of "diplomacy" enjoyed substantial autonomy: in his "journalistic", "political" and "historical-diplomatic" writings they weigh on historical reality certainly no less – and perhaps more – than "economy" and "class" in the analysis of his Marxist epigones'. In Marx, however, "politics" is frequently seen (internationally) as the autonomous site of resistance against the revolutionary dynamism of civil society' (Bongiovanni 1981, p. li).

relegation of the autonomy of politics to a 'point of departure' from his system attributes it such an exceptional status that everything that shows the diversity of ways in which Marx explained his critique of politics may end up being boxed in as a supposed 'anomaly' or 'heterodoxy'. Unable to convert his political and historical studies into exemplifications of a preconstituted (or deduced) method, they were eventually separated out from those of his works privileged as 'theoretical', and reduced to the ranks of 'occasional' pieces, 'written to earn a crust', and thus of lesser value. The division of his writings into major ones and lesser ones lays the basis for a possible reading whereby the 'anomalies' are an indirect means of demonstrating the existence of a 'norm', or, to put it another way, an 'orthodoxy'.

As such, I find highly questionable all those positions that, in emphasising in Marx his systemic-theoretical construction, disqualify those of his writings that contradict it, without mentioning that this raises a problem requiring further explanation. If the mass of meanings and formulations that together constitute Marx's *oeuvre* is not a homogeneous whole without differences and hierarchy, how can we conceive, how can we establish the relation these writings have to his entire body of work? To what extent is or was any reading of them conditioned from the outset by the overall conception of the system underpinning them? But we must also ask ourselves whether or not certain of his works (on Spain, Russia, Ireland, Poland or America) can, for their part, justify a definition or redefinition of the shape of his overall theoretical corpus, and on what conditions they can aspire to reconstruct and thus reshape the hitherto accepted identity of his system.

These are the reasons why I do not believe in the value extrapolating a series of aspects or beliefs from the writings of this or that period of Marx, ordering and hierarchising them such that they might constitute a 'paradigm', which of course can be none other than an affirmation of his 'Eurocentric' attributes. I think that the belief in progress, the necessity of man's dominion over nature, a new appreciation of productive technology and a secularisation of the Judeo-Christian vision of history, both underlay Marx's thought and never left him. If these elements represented the values and culture at the roots of a 'typical Eurocentric paradigm', as Franco highlighted,²⁹ it is extremely difficult to read through Marx's works, from his first to his last, without finding them. The sharp, paradoxical 'shifts of alignment' in history that we noted in his writings on Russia and village-communities, apart from referring us back to tensions in his thought clearly distinguishable in his youthful writings, do not need to be explained as the abandonment or radical transformation of some paradigm. His rejection of

29. Franco, Terán and De Ípola 1981.

any attempt to transform his genetico-structural reconstruction into a historical-philosophical theory, which for Franco implies 'passing from one interpretative system to another', does not in reality require substituting another paradigm for one which, established in the manner Marx's was, could allow for 'anomalies' without itself being put into question.

Franco warned of the difficulties posed by a 'theoreticist' interpretation when he made clear that 'the passage from one interpretative system to another is not sufficiently clear, either at the level or content or in terms of periodisation'.³⁰ From my point of view, this is of radical interpretative importance in that it obliges us to 'contextualise' – or, to put it another way, 'politicise' – our readings of the unconcealable changes, shifts, 'altered reference-points' and incorporation of new thematics very much evident in Marx's discourse. I am, therefore, firmly convinced that within Marx there are strongly-rooted conceptions, 'strong' theoretical elaborations, that lay the basis for reading him in the sense of a 'system', as Filippi aptly clarifies, that we would more properly call 'capitalist-centric'. If we want to be accurate, we cannot speak of 'Eurocentrism' when faced with an elaboration that explicitly recognises the shift of capitalism's centre of gravity, and as such of revolution, from Western Europe to various other places; that is, unless we attribute this notion a more 'philosophical' sense, thus not referring to Marx's 'ideology' or 'taste', nor his 'abstract-theoretical model'). From this perspective, we can ask ourselves to what extent this philosophical notion of Eurocentrism refers better to the universal unity of mankind, a sort of *polis* allowing us to think of the human race as one, and whether conceiving it in this manner does not itself establish certain anthropocentric criteria on the basis of which 'Eurocentrism' is but a bastard, impure form of an idea that sustains and transcends it, designating such bold concepts as 'the West', 'Western metaphysics' and so on. If this is the case, as I believe, then Marx is no more Eurocentric than Bolívar, Martí, Sarmiento, Rosas or anyone else: all America is Eurocentric, and in such a way that the category ceases to have any explanatory power with regard to the questions that concern us.

When Marx *de facto* challenged the paradigm of a unilinear succession of historical transformations – a paradigm that emerges in his texts, and of which he is often prisoner – he established the possibility of conceiving the differences, the parallels, the temporal discontinuity of processes of transformation. These moments did not fall in any one particular period of his life, or only in one period, but appeared throughout his thought: as such, they cannot be 'periodised'. He showed in an incontrovertible manner that this paradigm is besieged by other visions or ideas that dialectical figures are continually forced into, the

30. Franco 1981, p. 21.

destruction of the constitutive elements of contradictions, the movement of history constantly being dislocated and thrown forward without any prior or pre-constituted direction or meanings. I do not believe that this is the 'true Marx' that must be substituted for some other Marx now deemed 'false', for the simple reason that both are always present in some measure in an *oeuvre* that, in rejecting definitive conceptual apparatuses for analysing the problems it dealt with, ended up as enigmatic as it is fascinating. It is precisely because I fully accept that Marx's thought is not 'unambiguous', traversed as it is by strong tensions, that I feel compelled to emphasise that the character of my work is that of an 'essay'. It will be left to readers to judge to what extent my proposal has been achieved, but to set its intention is itself a way of defining the value of a type of work capable of stopping short of any 'totalising' approach: rather, it is a concrete means of productively facing up to the many and contradictory levels of the problems posed by reality; a reality like that of Latin America, which appears in Marx in the disturbing form of non-existence, an object that is not an object, a world that will not 'show itself'.

Latin America does not appear as such in Marx, not because the particular shape of the relation between nation and state in Europe clouded his view, nor because his conception of politics and the state barred him from recognising the different, nor indeed because the perspective from which he analysed historical processes led him to misunderstand societies beyond the reach of his explanatory method. None of these considerations, whatever their presence in Marx and their influence on his manner of engaging with reality, in themselves seem sufficient to explaining this phenomenon. All of them undervalue, curiously enough, the *political perspective* from which Marx analysed the international context, at the same time as they highlight his failings as an inevitable consequence of the rigidity of his interpretative hypothesis. But it was not set theoretical schemas, but rather strategic alternatives considered favourable to the revolution, that led Marx to privilege one terrain or another or to prioritise some particular force. The framework of his thought was not, then, consideration of the progressive character of capitalism, but rather the possibility of revolution that it might bring about. Revolution is the site – is it really a 'site'?; perhaps we might better, if ambiguously, say the 'point', to avoid running the risk of the word having a 'geographical' connotation – from which he characterises the 'modernity' or 'backwardness' of the movements of the real. And for precisely this reason, Marx's blessing or disapproval seems to rain down on events in an apparently capricious fashion. Accepting the 'progressive' character of capitalism, it is 'modern' England that Marx reviles on account of its collusion with the reactionary bastion of Tsarism. The international context could not be analysed, then, only and exclusively in terms of confidence – which Marx did, undeniably, have – in the

determining role of the productive forces. It required other types of approach, affording a view of those forces that, set in motion by the disruptive dynamic of capitalism, were prone to destroying everything that suppressed the impulses of civil society. Because the development of the capitalist mode of production takes place in a profoundly diverse and differentiated world, to try to portray and give shape to its highly versatile realities requires leaving aside any pretence of cohering it into an abstract, formal unity and, instead, opening up to a perspective on the particular and the fragmentary. The material enumeration of what actually exists carries with it the possibility of pinning down concrete historical reality and thus to empower a transformative practice. It was on the basis of politics, of accepting the diversity of the real, on the basis of presenting the contiguous elements of the social history of his time, that Marx attempted to ground a reading that could discover amidst the interstices of societies the holes through which the revolutionary dynamic of civil society could filter. This is the reason why his analysis of national 'cases' does not appear to obey 'global processes', 'mediations' or 'totalising perspectives' that would give a single meaning, a regularity, to their movements. Insofar as there is no 'theory' of the national question in Marx, national movements are but variables of one same political objective, namely to destroy all that impedes the development of progress, democracy and revolution. In the last analysis, the nations that really interested Marx were those that, from his perspective, could play such a historical role.

Given that Marx considered Latin America from the perspective of its supposed or real function in putting the brakes on the Spanish Revolution or as a hinterland of mounting Bonapartism, his perspective was strongly refracted by an adverse political judgement; one expressed very clearly in his text on Bolivar. The fact that, starting from a recognition of a perspective that transformed into a *political prejudice*, we can, *therefore*, trace to what point this prejudice was nurtured by his ideological spirit, theoretical conceptions and ideas originating in his ideological and cultural formation, does not invalidate the need to follow a *line of research* in accordance with the sense of Marx's *oeuvre* itself. Readers will, perhaps, ask themselves whether or not the conclusions here expressed challenge my essay itself in part or in full; and whether some of the reflections made two years after its initial elaboration mean that certain lines of reasoning now deemed unsatisfactory need to be subjected to fundamental critique. If so, I will be fully satisfied. Because even then, I will have achieved the objective I set myself, namely to privilege the importance of a certain theme: not only to highlight that which might help us piece together the vicissitudes of socialism in Latin America, but also to try out a means of *working within Marx* that shows us the reasons for his unquestionable relevance today.

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Index

- Adolph, José B. xxxii
 Adrianzén, Alberto xxxi
 Alfonsín, Raúl xii
 Alperovich, Moisei S. 54 n.
 Altamirano, Carlos xi, xii n.
 Althusser, Louis xxi, xxii, 119, 125
 Álvarez, Carlos 'Chacho' xii n.
 Álvarez, Federico xxiv
 Ames, Rolando xxxi
 Arismendi, General 106–9, 111
 Aristotle xv n.
 Auciello, Nicola 122 n., 126 n.
 Ave Lallemand, Germán xxvii, 2
 Axelrod, Pavel 25, 82
- Bakunin, Mikhail 84–5
 Barco, Oscar del xvii, xxxi, 75, 134
 Bauer, Otto 28–9
 Béjar, Héctor xliii, 128
 Béjar, Jorge xii n.
 Bermúdez, José Francisco 106
 Bernstein, Eduard 13, 32, 35, 47
 Bobbio, Norberto 120
 Bolívar, Simón ix, xiii, xiv, xvi, xviii, xix, xviii, xli, lii, 3, 4, 51, 53–67, 69, 91, 93–115, 138, 140, 142
Bolívar y Ponte ix, xiii, xiv, xxiii, 51, 56–7, 91, 103–15
 Bongiovanni, Bruno 138
 Borja, Jordi xii n.
 Boves, José Tomás 106
 Brion, Luis 107–9
 Buffon, Georges Louis Leclerc 10
 Bukharin, Nikolai 25, 87–8
 Burga, Manuel xxxi
 Burgos, Raúl xii n.
- Cacciari, Massimo 130
 Cajigal y Niño, Juan Manuel de 105
 Calvié, Lucien xix n.
Capital – extra-European focus xxi, xxxix, xli, xliv–xlv, 18–19, 23–5, 84–8 – *Spanish editions of* 23 n., 24 – *teleological interpretations of* 6, 13–14, 22, 26, 81, 84–8, 126, 136–8
 Cardoso, Fernando Henrique xii n.
 Casas, Manuel María 104
 Castañón, Adolfo xxiv n.
 Castillo, Manuel 104, 107
 Castoriadis, Cornelius 132
 Castro Andrade, Regis de xii n.
 Casullo, Nicolás xii n.
 Chevalier, Michel 49, 50 n.
 China xvi, xlv, 7, 18, 29–30, 40, 44
 Claudín, Fernando 82
 Cohen, Stephen F. 88
 Comintern *see* Third International
 Cordera, Rolando xii n.
 Cotler, Julio xii n.
 Crespo, Horacio ix–xxxiii
- Dana, Charles 53, 57, 99
 Danielson, Nikolai Frantsevich 32 n., 82, 86
 Darwin, Charles 14 n., 28
 Debray, Régis 3 n.
 Degregori, Iván xxxi
 Delich, Francisco xii n.
 Di Tella, Torcuato S. 66 n.
 Díaz, Alberto xxiv
 Draper, Hal 55 n., 57
 Duchet, Michele 76
 Ducoudray Holstein, Henri La Fayette
 Villaume 57, 97, 114–15
- Engels, Friedrich xvii n., xviii n., xxi n., xxii–xxiii, xlv, 3–5, 13–18, 20–1, 23–5, 28, 30–2, 35–8, 41, 53–7, 78, 80–7, 91, 93–5, 117
 Espartero, Baldomero 93
 Eurocentrism xvi–xvii, xx–xxiv, xli, xlv–xli, 5–6, 9–15, 20, 26–7, 38–9, 59, 67–8, 76, 93, 130–1, 134–5, 139–40

- Fajnzylber, Fernando xii n.
 Fernández Urbina, José Miguel 94–5
 Fernando VII, King of Spain 96
 Feuerbach, Ludwig xix, 63, 74, 118, 132
 Fierro, Manuel del 105
 Filippelli, Rafael xi n.
 Filippi, Alberto 133 n., 136, 140
 Flores Galindo, Alberto Tito xxx n.
 Foster, William Z. 54
 Franco, Carlos ix, xxx–xxxii, xxxv–xlix, liii, 124, 127, 133 n., 134–5, 139–40
 Freites, Pedro María 109
 Frost, Elsa Cecilia xxiv n.
 Furet, François xix–xx
- Garretón, Manuel Antonio xii n.
 Gerbi, Antonello 76–7
 Godio, Julio xxvii, xix n.
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von 78
 González Casanova, Pablo xii n.
 Gouldner, Alvin xv n., xxii,
 Gramsci, Antonio xi–xii, xx n., xxii, xxv, xxix, xl, 6, 67, 72, 132 n., 133
Grundrisse xxi, xxiii n., xxiv n., 17, 125, 136, 138
 Guizot, François Pierre Guillaume xix
 Guzmán Blanco, Antonio 100
- Halperín Donghi, Tulio 56 n., 57 n., 101–2
 Haupt, Georges 13 n., 14 n., 28 n., 31–3, 89–90.
 Haya de la Torre, Víctor x, xiv, 99
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich xiii, xvii–xxiii, xxxiii n., xlvii–xlviii, lii, 4 n., 5, 18 n., 28–30, 32, 35, 37, 39–45, 47, 56 n., 58, 60–63, 68, 76–80, 118, 120 n., 123 n., 124, 138 n.
 Heidegger, Martin 122–4
 Heller, Hermann 80
 Herzen, Alexander 78, 85
 Hippisley, John Coxe 57, 97, 115
 Hirschman, Alberto O. 80
 Hobbes, Thomas 120 n., 128,
 Hobsbawm, Eric J. 17 n., 21 n., 33 n., 43 n.
 Hobson, John Atkinson 80
 Huerta, Eugenia xxiv n.
 Hugo, Victor 59
 Humboldt, Alexander von 10, 48
- India xxi, xxxix, xlv, 14, 18, 21–2, 30, 40, 44, 83, 117
 Ípola, Emilio de xii n., 133 n., 139 n.
- Ireland, Marx's view of xvi–xvii, xx–xxi, xxiii, xxxii, xxxix, xlv–xlv, 14–15, 19, 20–22, 25, 35–6, 40, 59, 66, 83, 110, 137, 139
- Jaffe, Hosea 10 n.
 Jiménez Ricárdez, Rubén xxi n.
 Justo, Juan B. xxv, xxix, 21 n.
- Kautsky, Karl xxii, 13 n., 14 n., 35
 Kohan, Néstor xiv
 Kohn, Hans 32 n.
 Korsch, Karl xl, 71
 Kovalevsky, Aleksandr 84
 Krader, Lawrence 84
- Labastida Martín del Campo, Julio xii n.
 Labastida, Jaime xxiv n.
 Laclau, Ernesto xii n.
 Lafargue, Paul 23 n.
 Lassalle, Ferdinand 32 n.
 Lechner, Norbert xii n.
 Lenin, Vladimir xi, xx, xxxi, 6, 21 n., 24, 65 n., 82, 87, 88
 Levrero, Renato xxi n., 14, 15 n., 19 n.
 Lewin, Moshe 88
 López, Sinesio xxx–xxxii
 Löwy, Michael 91–3
 Loyola, Rafael xii n.
 Lubbock, John 84
 Lukács, Georg xxiii
 Luna Vegas, Ricardo xxxiii
 Luxemburg, Rosa xxxix–xl, xlix, 7–8, 71–5, 80, 124–5
- Maine, Henry Sumner 44, 45 n., 84
 Maira, Luis xii n.
 Mariátegui, José Carlos x, xxv, xxix, xxx–xxxiii, 54 n., 131 n.
 Marimón, Antonio xi n.
 Mariño, Santiago 105–6, 108–10
 Marramao, Giacomo 61 n., 62 n., 73 n.
 Martí, José 140
 Martínez Assad, Carlos xii n.
 Martinière, Guy 49 n., 50 n.
 Marx, Eleanor 14 n.
 Maurer, Georg von 83–4
 Mayorga, René Antonio xii n.
 Mazzini, Giuseppe 32 n.
 Mehring, Franz 47 n.
 Mella, Julio x
 metaphor in Marx 7, 10, 32 n., 47 n., 61,
 Mexico – *Aricó's exile in* xi–xiii, xxiv–xxxi – *French involvement*

- with* 48–50 – *Marx's attitude towards*
 xvi, xxxix, xlv, 3–4, 40, 43, 117
 Mikhailovsky, Nikolai
 Konstantinovich 81–2
 Miller, John 57, 97, 115
 Miroshevski, Vladimir Mikhailovich
 54
 Moniz Bandiera, Luiz Alberto xxvi n.
 Montalvo, Francisco 107
 Monteverde, Domingo de 104–5
 Morales, Francisco Tomás 108
 Morales Bermúdez, Francisco xxx
 Morgan, Lewis Henry 84
 Morillo, Pablo 107, 109–11
 Mouffe, Chantal xii n.
 Murmis, Miguel xi n.

 Napoleon Bonaparte xix, 53, 93, 99, 103,
 109, 112
 Napoleon III (Louis Napoleon) xix, xxiii,
 48–50, 53–55, 59, 62–3, 138 n.
 Nietzsche, Friedrich 123, 129
 Nin, Andreu 91
 Nisbet, Robert A. 32 n.

obshchina (Russian rural communes)
 xxi, xxxii, 6, 22–6, 83–85
 O'Donnell, Enrique 111–12
 Orfila Reynal, Arnaldo xxiv–xxv
 Ortega y Gasset, Ramón 77–9
 Ortega, Julio xxxiii

 Padilla, José Prudencio 112, 124
 Páez, José Antonio 98, 106, 110, 112–14
 Paggi, Leonardo 24 n.
 Paramio, Ludolfo xii n., xxvi, xxvii n.
 Paris, Robert xlii, 9
Pasado y Presente xi n., xxiii, xxiv, xxix,
 xxx n., xxxvii, xl, 23 n., 28 n., 82.
 Pauw, Cornelius de 10
 Paz, Octavio xiii, 131–2
 Pereyra, Carlos xii n.
 Petion, Alexandre 107–8
 Petkoff, Fernando xii n.
 Phear, John Budd 84
 Phelan, John L. 50 n.
 Piar, Manuel 108–9
 Plekhanov, Georgi 82
 Poland, Marx's view of 20, 28 n., 36–7,
 137, 139
 Ponce, Aníbal xiv, 54, 98–100
 Portantiero, Juan Carlos x–xii, xxiv–xxv,
 xxix, xxx n.
 Prado, Jorge del xxxiii

 'Preface' to the *Contribution to the Critique
 of Political Economy* 13, 138
 Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph 59 n.

 Ranke, Leopold von xix
 Raynal, Guillaume-Thomas François 10
 Réberieux, Madeleine 9 n.
 Reverte, Jorge xii n.
 Riazanov, David 11 n., 14 n., 25, 47 n., 91–3
 Ribas, José Félix 103–7
 Ribiero, Darcy xxxi n.
 Riz, Liliana de xii n.
 Rocas, Wenceslao xxiv n.
 Rodríguez de Francia, Gaspar xviii
 Rosas, Juan Manuel de 140
 Roscio, Juan Germán 110–11
 Rosdolsky, Roman xviii n., 28 n., 32 n.,
 38 n., 127 n.,
 Rúa, Pedro Juan 96
 Rubel, Maximilien 55 n., 96, 124 n.
 Russia xvi, xxi, xxxiii, xxxix, xlv, 6,
 10, 14, 18, 21–2, 25, 28 n., 30, 32 n., 34,
 36–8, 40, 49–51, 66, 78, 81–8, 137, 139,
 see also obshchina

 Sacristán, Manuel 91–4
 Sandoval, Pablo xxx n., xxxi
 Sands, Arthur 112
 Santa Anna y Pérez de Lebrón, Antonio
 de 4 n.
 Santander, Francisco de Paula 110, 112,
 114
 Sarmiento, Domingo Faustino 140
 Scaron, Pedro xxiii, 56
 Schlesinger, Rudolf 24 n.
 Schmidt, Alfred 124 n.
 Schmitt, Carl 128 n.
 Second International Marxism xvi, xxi,
 xxvi, xxviii, xxxvii, 2, 7, 20–1, 28, 34–5,
 67–8, 83–4, 89–90
 Siglo XXI xxiv, xxvii
 Silva, Ludovico 48 n.
 Simmel, Georg 133
Socialismo y participación xxx–xxxii
 Soler, Martí xxiv n.
 Soulouque, Faustin-Elie 53, 63
 Stalin, Joseph 54 n.
 Sucre, Antonio José de 112

 Terán, Oscar xxxi, 58 n., 133 n., 139 n.
 Themistocles 123 n.
 Third International xxi, xxvi–xxvii,
 xxxvi–xxxvii, 1, 7, 54 n., 84, 88–9,
 117 – *Sixth Congress* xxvi, 1 n., 88

- Tkachov, Piotr 85–6
 Tocqueville, Alexis de 78
 Torre, Juan Carlos xxiv–xxv
 Torre, Miguel de la 110–12
 Torres Fierro, Danubio xiii n.
 Torres-Rivas, Edelberto xii n.
 Touraine, Alain xxx n.
 Tronti, Mario 124 n., 128 n., 129 n.
 Tula, Jorge xxiii n., xxiv
 Túpac, Amaru 64
 Turati, Filippo 2
 Turkey, Marx's view of xvi, xxxix, xlv,
 21, 28 n., 30, 33, 36, 40, 43 n., 49, 66, 94
 Tvardovskaia, Valentina 86 n.
 Tylor, Edward Burnett 84

 Vargas Lozano, Gabriel xxxiii
 Vasconcelos, José xiv, 99
 Velasco Alvarado, Juan xxix–xxx

 Viollet, Alphonse 115
 Vorontsov, Mikhail 82

 Wallerstein, Immanuel 33 n.
 Wars of Independence (Latin
 America) ix, xvii, 10, 44–5, 56–7, 64,
 95, 102
 Weber, Max xv, 128 n., 129
 Weil, Eric 61
 Weill, Claudie 28 n., 31–3
 Wellesley, Richard Colley 103
 Wyttenbach, Johann Hugo 47 n.

 Zasulich, Vera xxxix, 23–5, 81, 85
 Zea, Francisco Antonio 109–11
 Zerméño, Sergio xii n.
 Zhukovsky, Yuly Galaktionovich 81
 Zierold, Pablo 2